Famous Women

Rachel

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The next volume in the Famous Women Series will be:

MADAM ROLAND. By Mathilde Blind.

Already published:

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RACHEL. By Mrs. Nina H. Kennard.

RACHEL.

BY

NINA H. KENNARD.

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PREFACE.

We offer this sketch of the life of Rachel to the public without comment or palliation. The great tragedian's name is one that still arouses varying emotions and reminiscences in those that knew her, or remember to have seen her on the stage. To the outside public she was a Fury, a Pythoness, almost superhuman in her passion and her genius. To her intimate friends she was a lovable, fascinating woman, in spite of all her faults. At times generous, loyal, and devoted; mean, jealous, and vindictive at others. To her family and children she was ever an affectionate, self-sacrificing daughter, sister, and mother; and it is this side of her character that has been revealed to us by the correspondence lately published by M. Heylli, from which we have given numerous quotations, hoping by their charm and the warm-hearted affections they evince, to engender a kindlier and more charitable view of her stormy, unhappy life.

From Jules Janin's *Rachel et la Tragédie* we have collected most of the information concerning the professional portion of her career. Arsène Houssaye, for some time director of the Théâtre Français, and an intimate friend of the actress, has, in a volume just published, given some piquant anecdotes to the world, which are amusing, but not always distinguished by loyalty to the memory of his dead friend. Madame de

B——'s *Memoirs of Rachel* are avowedly hostile, and therefore to a certain extent valueless as a trustworthy biography. All other information respecting the tragedian can only be culled from the columns of the newspapers of the day, and one or two contemporary pamphlets. We fall back on her letters, therefore, as the true key to this extraordinary woman's character. Written in moments snatched from the arduous duties of her profession, or in the rare periods of rest she allowed herself from the fatigues of her unceasing wanderings to and fro, they show no signs of premeditation or pedantry. She wrote, as we imagine she talked, easily and wittily. How deeply pathetic and sad they become, however, towards the end, when touching on her own suffering, her disappointed illusions, or her fears and hopes for the children she loved so well!

We have tried to extract the poetry and romance there is to be found in this life, rejecting what is base and unworthy. There is something that ever kindles enthusiasm in energy or devotion to an object outside the area of our petty cares and thoughts. And surely there is enough poetry in the mournful history of this genius and passion burning up the body they animated, as a flame burns up a candle; enough romance in the perseverance and constancy of the little Jewish girl who, uneducated, unbefriended, unbeautiful, made the world thrill with her name, solely by the might of her inspiration and eloquence.

NINA H. KENNARD.

NOTE ON PORTRAITS.

Many portraits of Rachel were attempted by contemporary artists. Horace Vernet, struck by the Oriental picturesqueness of the type, attempted to perpetuate it; but she only consented to sit once to him, so that in finishing the likeness he lost the individuality and made it a replica of the innumerable Rebeccas and Esthers in his studio. Geffroy introduced her into both his celebrated pictures, representing the Comédie Française in 1849 and in 1852. "I would like you," she writes to a friend, "to see the portrait that my colleague Geffroy has done of your *magnifique* in her ermine robes as La Czarina." The portrait will last longer than the play, then the woman, or than the memory of either. A sketch of Rachel, after death, made by Madame O'Connell, was given by Sarah Félix to Émile de Girardin, who in turn gave it to Sarah Bernhardt. The best portrait, however, that was done of her is by Muller, now belonging to her son, Alexander Walewski. The whole history of the woman is written in the deep sadness of the eyes, the waxen pallor of the brow and cheeks, which seem worn with the passions and exertions that every night tore the fragile body to pieces, while the tender softness of the expression round the mouth bespeaks the mother who wrote: "Come into my heart, dear little one, and find there all the tenderness of which there is an unlimited supply for my sons. It is riches without end that God gives mothers who love their children."

N. H. K.

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RACHEL.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

On the 24th March, 1821, Elisa Rachel Félix was born in the Soleil d'Or, principal inn of the small village of Munt, in the canton of Aarau, Switzerland.

The only record still existing of the event is an entry made by the burgomaster of Aarau, to the effect that the wife of a pedler (*la femme d'un homme qui colportait*) had been confined of a female child in the village of Munt. The entry bears no mention of family or nationality, and is not recorded in any civil or religious register.

The Félix family came originally from Germany, but Rachel's father, born in Metz, had been naturalized a Frenchman. Abraham Félix was superior in intellect to his station, and had studied in his youth with the intention of becoming a rabbi; subsequently, urged by the necessity

of earning a livelihood, he forsook the Church and became a travelling commission agent and merchant. Business affairs did not prosper with him, however, and he gradually sank into a position not much better than that of a travelling pedler. Accompanied by his wife, Esther Haya, he wandered from town to town, and from fair to fair, pursuing, like the majority of itinerant Jews, a variety of avocations, selling whatever suited the market for the time being. They had only arrived in Munf a few days before Rachel's birth, and left it a few days after, helped on their road by the charitable contributions of some of the Israelite inhabitants of the village.

In consequence of this nomad existence each child of the Felix family was native of a different place, and each in turn was looked upon as a burden by the mother and an expense by the father. Several died in childhood; six only lived to grow up, — Sarah, Rachel, Raphael, Leah, Dinah, and Rebecca. Sarah, the eldest, was born in Germany, in the midst of the old customs and traditions of the nationality to which she belonged, and ever remained the most thoroughly Jewish member of the family. Raphael was born in Macon, Rebecca (known for some years as Rosalie) was born in Lyons, and Dinah (known as Emilia) in Paris.

For ten successive years the family wandered through Switzerland and Germany, until at last, aided by the energy and industry of his wife, Abraham was able to take a small lodging in Lyons, where Esther sold and mended old theatrical dresses, and he gave lessons in German. The children were obliged to help towards paying the expenses of the household. Sarah, the eldest, went through the streets singing, accompanied by her younger sister, Rachel, who collected the few pence they were able to obtain from the charity of the passers-by. They often trundled a third child in a little cart between them, thus adding to the interest they excited, and relieving their mother of the care of the baby for a short time.

Rachel would relate with great glee in later days, how once or twice, when their exchequer was very low, and they were ashamed to go home with so little, she had pretended to faint, hoping thus to work on the pity of the audience. One day the performance was so good that the proprietor of the café opposite to which they had been singing took her up in his arms and carried her inside, where they warmed her, fed her, and gave her a glass of wine. A hat was then sent round among the customers, and as much as ten francs collected. Already the theatrical instinct had begun to show itself: unconsciously

she was preparing for the great fainting scene in *Les Horaces*, with which later, in this very town of Lyons, she electrified the populace. "*Cette ville de Lyon me rappelle toute mon enfance*," she writes to her father ten years later, when enjoying one of the greatest triumphs of her brilliant career.

The "Lyonnais," who refused a few sous to the little beggar girl, were then only too anxious to draw her carriage through the streets, and present her with gold crowns, amply rewarded by a smile or nod from the great tragedian. It is said that during that celebrated visit in 1843, escaping one night from the crowd that came to do her honor, she wandered off to visit the different parts of the city she had been in the habit of frequenting with her sister. On arriving at a small cafe near the Théâtre des Célestins, she seated herself at one of the tables and ordered some refreshments; but she who as a little girl would have eaten voraciously of *brioches à un sou la pièce*, now turned away contemptuously from what was set before her. The people round also began to recognize the idol of the moment, and she was obliged to hasten away from their importunity. She had won all she had ever hoped for in her most ambitious dreams. Fame, riches, applause, — all were hers in abundance; and yet, perhaps, she could not

help feeling with regret that the light-hearted irresponsibility of those childish days of poverty and suffering was gone never to return.

Towards 1830 the Felix family found their way to Paris, where they continued the same struggle for existence as in Lyons. The early details of a career that begins in obscurity and rises into sudden notoriety are almost always contradictory and misleading, but most of those we give here concerning Rachel are taken from her own lips: she was fond of talking of her childhood to her intimate friends. Monsieur Arsène Houssaye was one of them, and has given us in his sketch entitled *La Comédienne* a description of both the sisters as they went about the streets of Paris in those days when, as she would say later, "she had learnt the actress's best art, of being only sad at home." "Is it any wonder," she remarked to some one on another occasion, "I should be so fond of money, considering the suffering I went through in my youth to earn a few sous?" For to this proud, sensitive young Bohemian, imbued already with a certain artistic appreciation, it must have been intense suffering thus to exhibit herself to a careless, unappreciative crowd. On the other hand, Sarah, the elder by some years, liked the vulgar applause and admiration that her beauty and youth excited.

The two sisters formed in every way a remarkable contrast: the one with her rosy cheeks, fair hair, and self-confident expression; the other pale, subdued, with head bent forward under the wreath of artificial flowers that encircled it. Rachel would relate, Houssaye tells us, how one day, when singing in the Place Royale, a benevolent-looking man, with kindly eyes, stopped as he went by, and, attracted by the look of intelligence in the younger girl's face, put a five-franc piece into her hand. She took the piece of silver, and watched the receding figure, while close beside her she heard a voice say, "That is Victor Hugo." Little did the great poet think the pale-faced child was one day destined to effect a complete revolution in that world of art of which he was then the head.

A much more important meeting than this, so far as the young tragedian's future was concerned, was the one with Étienne Choron, teacher of a class of sacred music that held its meetings in the Rue Vaugirard. The story goes that one day, walking along the Boulevards, he heard the sisters sing, and pressed through the crowd that had gathered round them. He saw a little girl of ten or twelve, thinly clad, standing in the snow, the very picture of misery. With her benumbed fingers she held out a wooden bowl for a sou. Choron

dropped a silver coin into it. His heart was touched, and the deepest feeling of interest for the child was awakened. "Who taught you to sing so well?" he asked. "Nobody, Sir," was the answer; "I have learnt as I could." "But where did you hear those airs you sang just now?" "I picked them up here and there; when I go about the streets, I listen under the windows to those ladies and gentlemen who sing, and try to catch the time and the words, and afterwards arrange them the best way I can." "You are cold and hungry. Come both of you with me; I will provide for you." Choron led them away, and little Rachel and her sister never appeared on the Boulevards again.

After attending the School of Sacred Music for some time, the master came to the conclusion that the metallic and harsh tones of Rachel's voice made his pupil more suited to declamation than singing; he also found her less apt, and less easy to teach, than her sister Sarah. In a letter addressed to the girl's parents, quoted by M. Jules Leconte in the *Figaro* newspaper, he says: —

> Elisa takes up much more of my time than her sister, for she has not so good a memory, is less industrious, and has not nearly her facility.

So much for academic opinions. Sarah, to the last day that she appeared on the stage,

sang hopelessly out of tune, and never rose beyond mediocrity as an actress. It seems difficult to reconcile the statement regarding Rachel's want of industry with the energy displayed by her later: as yet the impetus of enthusiasm for her art had evidently not been given.

In the following letter, which was enclosed in the one from Choron quoted above, she seems anxious already to disarm her father's and mother's displeasure. Having been written at the early age of twelve, it is both badly spelt and expressed, not indeed that at any time of her life was the great actress careful as to her orthography.

DEAR PARENTS, — I am unable to express my great joy in receiving your letter. I was afraid something had happened to you, so long a time had passed without my hearing. I am delighted at the idea of seeing you soon and showing you the progress I have made. M. Choron is very pleased and is so good to me. I can only show my gratitude by working hard. Good-bye, dear father and mother. Receive the assurance of my deep respect. Your obedient daughter sends you a kiss, as well as to my little brother Raphaël and my sister Rebec.

ÉLISA.

Another letter, written about this time, should be quoted; the spelling and method of expression are almost as eccentric: —

MY DEAR MOTHER. — Forgive me for not having sent a letter sooner, but, as my sister is older than me, I thought it better for her to tell you all the news. I will only tell you that every one is still satisfied with me, and continues to love me, especially Mademoiselle Alexandrine. I am always called *Pierrot* (Sparrow), and I must say I deserve it, for I am as giddy as a real *Pierrot*. I am working to deserve the kisses you will give me when you come. Be sure you execute the commission I give you, and that is to embrace thirty millions of times my dear papa, the little girl that loses her shoes, and my little Rosalie.

Your obedient and submissive daughter,

PIERROT ÉLISABETH FÉLIX.

Élisa, as she was still called, often annoyed her master by her gypsy-like love of wandering. She called her brother Raphael "the Wandering Jew," but she had a great deal of the same restlessness even in those early years. Caged in the class-room, she was like the sparrow whose name they had given her, and whenever she could she escaped to the neighboring Bois de Boulogne, to sit for hours in the sunshine, singing and gathering flowers. One day, we are told, Choron, while walking through the woods, heard voices singing the hymns he taught. He was astonished; he never had succeeded in inducing his pupils to perform so well in school. Approaching nearer, what was his amusement to see the little Rachel,

standing in the midst of a circle, filling his position as conductor, armed with a stick with which she beat time with the greatest solemnity and energy.

The following is a letter of excuse, written on one of these occasions. For the sake of the archness and freshness of expression, we give this one in its original French: —

MON BON MAÎTRE, — Vous m'excuserai si je ne viens pas prendre ma leçon parce que je vais au Bois de Boulogne. Mais j'étais très fatigué. Maman, m'a amené au baint, et après je suis rentré à la maison j'ai déjeuné, et me suis couché. Ah ne me grondez pas, car je ne pouvez pas sortir !

ÉLISA.

In spite of differences of opinion between master and pupil, however, Rachel always cherished a feeling of affection for Choron.

We find her, in 1840, when the little girl who was "neither apt nor industrious" had risen to the zenith of her fame, and was making Europe thrill with her name, writing thus to M. Laurentie: —

9th February, 1840.

SIR, — I have only for the first time to-day read a work that you published in 1838, entitled *Fragments de Morale et de Litterature*. I very much regret not having seen it before, but I have only lately cared for study or devoted myself to reading. I cannot delay, Monsieur,

telling you of the delight your Chapter on M. Choron caused me. He was my first master, and his memory is very dear to me. You have described him exactly. His numerous pupils, who let remember him with affection, owe you a great debt of gratitude. I hope you will at least allow me to pay mine, and accept my most respectful thanks.

CHAPTER II.

GIRLHOOD.

In December, 1834, Rachel definitely left the school in the Rue Vaugirard. As the months went on, she showed less capacity for singing and more for declamation. Choron had hoped to develop a contralto voice, but hers exceeded the ordinary contralto compass. He determined, therefore, to persuade his friend Pagnon Saint Aulaire, who educated pupils for the stage independently of the Conservatoire, to take her into his class. Like Choron, Saint Aulaire recognized the girl's dramatic genius, and for four years devoted himself to the task of developing it. Not only did he teach her declamation, but he made her read the best French authors, and endeavored to improve her style of expression in writing and speaking, which, as we have seen, was entirely uncultured. The *rôles* of Hermione, Iphigenia, and Marie Stuart were imprinted by him in his pupil's memory, word by word, line by line, intonation by intonation. Master and pupil discussed and fought over every detail.

She preferred to study the part of Dorinne in *Tartuffe*, Philaminte in *Les Femmes Savantes*, or Lisette in *Les Folies Amoureuses*. She laughed at those who declared that her voice and appearance were only suited for tragedy, and it was with the greatest difficulty that her master could persuade her of the justice of the decision. It is noteworthy that to the last day she occupied the stage Rachel retained her love of comic parts, in which none of her best dramatic qualities appeared. On the 1st of July, 1844, she ventured to act Mariette on the boards where she had just enchanted her Parisian audience with Phèdre, and is said to have affirmed that her representation of the *soubrette's* part was better than that of the Greek Queen.

Now and then Saint Aulaire received the reward of his trouble by a flash of genius and comprehension that startled him. He had hired the Salle Molière, and allowed his pupils to act there once a week. The arrangements relating to these performances were unique in their way. A list of the pieces to be played being hung up, any one by selecting his part and paying for it — the amount charged being in proportion to the importance of the character — could strut his brief hour upon the stage; the amount expended in acting was returned in tickets, so that the aspiring amateurs were always sure of an audience.

Here one day Rachel recited the narrative of Salema in *L'Abufar* of Ducis, describing the anguish of the mother who, while dying of thirst in the desert, gives birth to her child. While uttering the thrilling story, the thin face seemed to lengthen with horror, the small deep-set black eyes dilated with a fixed stare, as though she witnessed the harrowing scene, and the deep guttural tones, despite a slight Jewish accent, awoke a nameless terror in the hearer, carrying him through the imaginary woe with a strange feeling of reality not to be shaken off as long as the sounds lasted. The audience listened with rapt attention, and the sigh of pent-up agitation with which they greeted her at the end expressed their emotion better than the loudest applause. Still she had to cope with grave disadvantages. The voice, afterwards Rachel's greatest charm, was then harsh and unmusical; the figure, afterwards so graceful, was then stunted and thin; the face, afterwards so expressive and mobile, was then pale and ugly.

Her appearance at this time is thus graphically described by one, an intimate friend in later years, who saw her for the first time in 1834:

It was a cold gray November morning. Rachel was dressed in a short calico frock, the pattern of which was the common one of a red ground spotted with white; the trousers were of the same material; the boots of coarse

black leather, hard in front, but scrupulously polished. Her hair was parted at the back of the head, and hung down her shoulders in two plaits. Everything about the child was of the simplest and clumsiest description, but the "ensemble" everywhere bore little or no trace of poverty — whatever poverty the child always avowed. With these other plays herself, he goes on to say, little Rachel was unemotionally pathetic, grave and silent beyond her years, every feature in the long scowlish face bore the impress of maturity and even dignity, with which education had little to do.

M. Villemont, the correspondent of the *Indépendance Belge*, also describes Rachel at this period of her life: —

It was at the Salle Molière, where Saint Aulaire made his pupils act, that I first saw her in 1845. One of my friends, a young man of good family, who was possessed with the passion for private theatricals, invited me to witness his performance in the part of Dorville in the *École des Vieillards*. As we neared the theatre, my friend stopped and spoke to a thin half-starved-looking little girl, who leant against a column, under a smoky lamp. "Eliza, would you rather have a dinner or fried potatoes?" he asked. "Fried potatoes,' was the answer.

My friend, who, from being accustomed to play the parts of kings and nobles, had equalled them in princely prodigality, handed her a twopenny piece. I followed his example. The child disappeared and returned almost immediately, bearing a paper horn of fried potatoes, temptingly hot and brown. She offered the "horn" to my friend and myself, and this was the only time I ever partook of a meal with Mademoiselle Rachel.

In 1836 Saint Aulaire applied to the then director of the Comédie Française, Jouslin de la Salle, on behalf of his pupil "La petite Diablesse," as he called her. Jouslin gives the following account of the interview: —

Saint Aulaire entered my office one morning and spoke with extreme animation about a poor Jewish girl, whom he described to me as the ideal of tragedy, and the only person capable of recalling the *chefs d'œuvres* of our tragic repertory. It was Rachel for whom the professor demanded an audience, which I granted on the spot. Mademoiselle Mars, myself, and Mademoiselle Anais were the only persons present. Saint Aulaire recited with the *débutante*, who was then very small. She had selected Hermione in *Andromaque* and Mariette in the *Dépit Amoureux*. She commenced with the latter, in which she showed no remarkable talent; but she had hardly finished in *Andromaque* the ironical passage "The Farewell to Orestes" than we uttered exclamations of surprise. For a very long time we had not heard the verses declaimed with so much precision or such energy. The performance over, Mademoiselle Mars kissed the young girl (who was quite moved by the success she had just achieved) and evinced great interest in her. Upon the remark that she was very short for the parts of queens and great heroines, the characters she had decided on playing, Mars reminded us that Mademoiselle Maillet, the great tragic actress, was still shorter. "Besides," she added, "it is a good fault, the child will grow."

What a scene for a picture! Mars — the beautiful and successful Mars — who had reigned a queen for so long, and who still retained a

great deal of the grace and beauty that enchanted the France of the latter end of the preceding century, and the pale dark-faced Jewess, with the eyes of flame, who was destined to take the sceptre that was dropping from the elder woman's grasp. The result of this audience was that Rachel obtained an engagement at the Comédie Française to play children's parts at a salary of eight hundred francs a year. The *rôle* of her *début* was even decided on, Louison in *La Fausse Agnes*. She rehearsed; her dress was ordered, made, and tried on; and then, for some reason which has never been explained, and of which the theatre does not even possess a trace, this first engagement was never fulfilled, and Rachel went off to the Conservatoire.

Here she did not seem to obtain the notice she merited, and made little progress. Samson, then at the height of his reputation, saw her, but refrained from expressing an opinion as to her powers; Michelet declared her voice to be so unmusical as to unfit her for the stage; and Provost — the harsh and violent Provost — informed her in the most offensive manner, after one lesson, that she was only fit to do what she had done before, — sell flowers in the streets. The story goes, that some months later, having played Hermione to a crowded house, and having been recalled with storms of applause to

receive a perfect ovation of flowers, she bent down, picked up some, and, filling her Greek tunic with them, approached Provost, and with saucy grace held it out, saying, "I have followed your advice, M. Provost: I am selling bouquets, will you buy?"

Meantime, neglected and despised, the poor girl worked on until an insult was put upon her, by the professors, which she would not bear. *Tartuffe* had been announced for representation by the pupils; she was assigned the part of Flipote the servant-girl, who simply appears upon the scene in the first act, that her ears may be boxed by Madame Pernelle. Humiliation could no further go, and she left the Conservatoire in high dudgeon, only to suffer still further, for a severely inflamed throat necessitated the cutting of her tonsils; and for months she remained at home in enforced idleness.

Disheartened, but animated still by one idea, one passion, as soon as she was able to speak again she went to her old friend Saint Aulaire, who promised to do what he could for her. Like all their nationality, Rachel's family were superstitious: Madame Félix told fortunes by cards. "I often cried as a child," Rachel would say in later years, "when my mother predicted ill luck." This evening when she returned to the wretched garret they inhabited in the Rue

des Lions Saint-Paul, she asked her mother to tell her fortune. It turned out a brilliant one, and the little girl went to bed full of hopes for the future. Next day she received a message that M. Poirson, manager of the Gymnase Theatre, wished to see her, on the recommendation of M. Saint Aulaire. She went, accompanied by her father, and gave such satisfaction by her acting of the part of Eryphile that Poirson immediately offered to engage her. The following account of the interview is given by M. de Mirecourt:

"What salary do you expect, Mademoiselle?" asked Poirson.

The young girl looked at her father, who hastened to answer in his German-French *patois*, "*Nous fulons teux mille vrancs, gomme un liard.*"

"You are worth more than that," said Poirson; "I will give you three thousand, with an annual increase of a third of this sum, if you succeed at my theatre."

"*Pres pien! che signe dout te suite!*" cried old Félix, astonished at this good fortune.

"We must now decide what name Mademoiselle will adopt on the play-bill. Under no circumstances can I allow that of Élisa to appear."

"Do you like the name of Rachel better?" asked the young girl.

"I should think so. It is the very thing! Keep to that."

On the 1st May, 1837, Mademoiselle Rachel Félix was announced to appear on the stage of the Gymnase Theatre in a new play in two acts, called *La Vendéene*, written for her by Paul Duport.

CHAPTER III.

LA VENDÉENE.

"*La Vendéene* was one of those plays," Jules Janin tells us, "which the Gymnase has given hundreds of times and will give hundreds of times again. Ephemeral and slight, they are acted a few nights and then sink into oblivion."

This little drama would have shared the same fate had it not been for the young actress who appeared in the principal part. On her account, and on her account alone, it will be remembered as long as dramatic art exists.

The plot was borrowed to a certain extent from Sir Walter Scott's novel of the *Heart of Midlothian*. A poor girl, daughter of Thibaut, a peasant who has been condemned to death during the insurrection in La Vendée, travels alone and unprotected to Paris, for the sake of imploring Josephine, wife of the First Consul, to use her influence in saving her father's life. The plot is of the simplest. Fresnault has been sent to pacify La Vendée. The General, though a kind-hearted man anxious to spare the Ven-

déans, is devoted heart and soul to the First Consul.

On one occasion he receives an order to arrest and try by court-martial a certain peasant called Thibaut. The command, equivalent to a sentence of death, is brought by Victor, a young captain, aide-de-camp of Bonaparte, cousin of Josephine, and a favorite at Malmaison. When he delivers it he is unconscious of the presence of a young girl, who stands behind, pale and shrinking. He hears her sob, turns, and is so moved by her grief as to forget duty and danger and burn the paper, thus giving Geneviève time to go to Josephine and implore her to save her father's life.

In the second act we are taken from the Vendéan cottage to the gardens at Malmaison. Victor has returned and confessed to Josephine that he has burnt Bonaparte's order, and that she must help him to save Thibaut's life.

Josephine is terrified. She reproaches her cousin for his imprudence, tells him it is a most unpropitious moment to endeavor to save a Vendéan, for a plot, hatched by them, to take the First Consul prisoner and send him to England, had just been discovered. As the young captain, crest-fallen and sad, turns to leave his cousin's presence, he is arrested by order of Bonaparte. Then comes the most touching

scene, the one in which Rachel made her first theatrical success. Geneviève has arrived at Malmaison, weary and footsore. Hope and courage have failed her, and she sinks, half-fainting, in a corner of Josephine's drawing-room. When the Empress, proud and triumphant — for this is the first day of her imperial splendor — enters, she is startled by seeing the poorly clad, tearful peasant girl. In a moment Geneviève is at her feet; and so eloquently and well does she plead her cause, that Josephine induces the Emperor to pardon both Thibaut and Victor.

There were two stanzas in particular which the young actress chanted rather than sang: —

> Je croyais encore l'invoquer:
> Vers moi soudain elle s'avance,
> Et du doigt semble en indiquer
> Une Ville inconnue, immense.
> Un seul mot rompit le silence:
> Paris! Et puis elle ajouta,
> Comme en reponse à ma prière:
> Vas y seule, à pied — car c'est là
> Que tu pourras sauver ton père.

Jules Janin tells us how — "Some years afterwards, one winter evening, Rachel, then very ill, was lying on the sofa in her *entresol* of the Chaussée d'Antin; the rain was beating outside, the thunder rolling, the wind blowing. The

guests in the darkened room were sitting silent, every one depressed by the sadness of the young actress, over whom the shadow of death had even then fallen. Suddenly, with her deep yet sonorous voice, she began singing this couplet, and made them shiver by the expression she gave to the words —

> Une ville inconnue, immense,
> Paris ! . . .
> Vas y seule — à pied — car c'est là
> Que tu pourras sauver ton père.

Her voice died away in a sob, and she burst into tears."

Poor, eloquent, unhappy Rachel, with her passionate heart and erratic genius! It was the Marseillaise of her past misery and approaching death that she sang that evening. Unaided and on foot she had wandered to the scene of her triumph, to the goal of her fame, and felt the prize turning to dust and ashes in her hand.

Already in the *Vendéene* the young actress showed that strict attention to all details of dress and appearance that distinguished her during her artistic career. There was no girlish attempt to enhance her beauty, or hide natural defects of which none more than she was conscious. She only thought of her part and how best to personify it. She did not attempt to appear other than the peasant girl in rough

shoes and coarse dress; but there was something heroic in her very walk, something infinitely pathetic in the voice "that seemed too big for the fragile body;" something tragically passionate under the calm quiet dignity of the unpropitiating appearance. Many are the proofs, both in print and on hearsay, we have of the effect she produced on appreciative critics from the first.

Janin thus describes her, in the weekly *feuilleton* of his paper: "The author of *La Vendéene* has not only wished to write a drama, but also to bring forward a little girl, a child of barely fifteen, called Rachel. This child is no phenomenon, and will never, thank goodness, be a prodigy. Mademoiselle Rachel acts with much feeling, enthusiasm, and intelligence, but with very little skill. She intuitively understands the part given to her; she has no need of lessons or counsel from any one. There is no effort, no exaggeration, no cries, no strained attitudes, and above all no coquetry; on the contrary, she is extremely quiet and dignified, and makes no attempt to move or propitiate her audience by airs and graces. The child's voice is rough and hoarse, like the voice of a child; her hands are red, like a child's hands; her foot, like her hand, is hardly formed; she is not pretty, but pleasing: in a word, there is a great future in store for this

young genius, and she receives a tribute of tears, emotion, and interest from the as yet small audience that come to do her honor."

Edwin Forrest, the well-known American actor, was asked to go to the theatre and give his opinion of an actor of whom the manager had great hopes. Forrest attended the performance, and told the manager afterwards that the actor could never rise above respectable mediocrity. "But that Jewish-looking girl," he added, "that little bag of bones, with the marble face and the flaming eyes, — there is demoniacal power in her. If she lives, and does not burn out too soon, she will become something wonderful."

Bouffé, who was present at the rehearsal, is said to have exclaimed, "What an odd little girl! There is certainly something in her; but her place is not here."

Of this fact Rachel herself and the manager of the Gymnase soon became aware. The *Vendéene* was played sixty times, but without lucrative result. The audience was principally composed of Jews, co-religionists of the Félix family, who occupied the pit and gallery, while the stalls and boxes were empty. Her appearance and style of acting were not suited to the species of light comedy usually given at the theatre; and after attempting, without success, under Madame Volny's tuition, to undertake the

rôle of Suzanne in the *Mariage de Raison*, she once more, on her own initiative, endeavored to open negotiations with the Comédie Française through her old master, Saint Aulaire, and wrote the following letter to Védel: —

16 Dec. 1837.

MONSIEUR, — M. Saint Aulaire has informed you of my wish to present myself to the Comédie Française; you told him that I might have an interview with you on the subject. I beg you to let me know when you will grant me this favor.

I have the honor to salute you,

RACHEL FÉLIX, of the Gymnase,

Rue Beauregard 18.

This letter, Védel confessed, remained unanswered. Rachel then made up her mind to ask Samson, who had taught her at the Conservatoire, to take her again as pupil in tragic parts. Samson, who had always a certain opinion of her powers, promised to help her as well as he could, and Rachel's career was from that moment decided. She now learnt to give movement and warmth to what hitherto had been conned as a task; every tone, every look, was studied and practised until it became a portion of her own personality and the expression of her own individuality. That industry and energy which, as M. Legouvé tells us, made her study one short sentence in his play of *Louise de Lignerolles*

three hours, reading it over and over with different intonations and expressions — that industry which Choron pronounced her to be deficient in — seemed now awakened, and in three months she presented herself again to the Comédie Française the most accomplished and marvellous actress the world has ever seen.

It will be interesting here to give Samson's account, as told in his *Memoirs*, of the beginning of his celebrated pupil's career, and of the state of dramatic art when she first appeared : —

Talma when he died, in 1826, seemed to have carried classic tragedy away with him. The elder generation mourned the loss ; but their children not only did not share their regrets, but longed for the total destruction of the past. While the political horizon was dark with storm clouds, a literary revolution was taking place, one to a certain extent being caused by the other. The author of *Hernani* had gained the day. Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire were played at distant intervals to empty houses, and these rare representations only showed more effectually how indifferent was the public to this kind of representation. After two centuries of triumph and success, the classic drama was banished to the silence and dust of library shelves.

But suddenly, in 1838, twelve years after the death of our great tragedian, an unexpected event took place ; a reaction, which astonished even those who wished for it, brought back crowds to that theatre in the Rue Richelieu which had lately been entirely deserted. Already the name of the actress who performed this miracle is on your lips. It was Rachel.

This young girl had been for some time acting in tragic parts in a small theatre in the Rue Saint Martin, where on Sunday, at certain hours, dramatic representations were given. The director was Saint Aulaire, who, although a member of the Comédie Française, only occupied a subordinate position. He made his pupils act, and gave them tickets, which they were allowed to sell, instead of receiving payment themselves. The plays in which Rachel acted were the most lucrative. She often appeared, therefore, and was applauded and admired by the inhabitants of the quarter. Some of my pupils, astonished by her talent, spoke to me about her, and made me anxious to judge for myself. I went to hear her one day, when she was acting in Corneille's *Don Sancho.* I confess that she surprised me by her performance of Isabella, Queen of Castile. I was struck by the tragic pathos she displayed. The divine spark animated this young and fragile creature. She was then so small that she was obliged to raise her head to speak to the actors on the stage with her; yet by her air of queenly dignity she gave you the impression of looking down on them. They were great gawky lads, unaccustomed to the stage; her ease made them appear still more awkward. There were, however, if I can so express myself, "lacunæ" of intelligence. The *rôle* was imperfectly understood here and there, but she had caught the sentiment and tragedy, and one could foresee the great future in store for this marvellous child. I went behind the scenes between the acts to compliment her. She had already dressed in male attire to act in the comedy that was to follow. She and her comrades were playing some game, I know not what, in which it was necessary to hop on one foot, and it was in this attitude I surprised the ex-Queen of Spain. She listened to my compliments with one leg in the air,

thanked me with much courtesy, and began hopping again directly I had done.

Some time after she presented herself at the Conservatoire, where the assembled professors were favorably impressed. She soon left the Conservatoire for the Gymnase Theatre. She made her first appearance there in a piece called *La Vendeuse*, in which she produced a favorable impression. The director, however, soon recognized that her talent was not suited to his theatre: he advised her to study for the Comédie Française. Then it was that she came to see me again. I had often thought of her during the space that intervened, and was delighted to welcome her back. I became her master, and eight months afterwards she appeared on the stage of the Théâtre Français in the part of Camille in *Les Horaces*.

In a diary Samson kept during his professional career we find the following entry:

February 6, 1838.

I have persuaded Vedel to engage Mademoiselle Rachel Félix; she is to receive 4,000 francs. As, owing to the poverty of her parents, she is extremely ignorant, I have told her father to let her have Madame Pronzet, my children's governess, to teach her history and grammar; he is to pay her only twenty francs a month. As for myself, I have undertaken to continue my lessons gratis.

Before closing this chapter we must give a letter of Poirson's, the manager of the Gymnase, written to Rachel when she had become famous. It was found carefully laid away among Rachel's papers after her death. The

expressions of affection show the feeling he cherished for the young girl whose genius he had been the first to recognize.

I thank my good little Rachel, now so great, for her kind remembrance of me. I regret deeply that the state of my health prevents my going to tell her how deeply I am touched, and how proud I am of having been the first to discover that genius which, having found its legitimate development, was sure, sooner or later, to assert its power over the public. But what delights me still more is that in the midst of all this success the great actress has remained what the humble *débutant* was, good-hearted and simple, which proves that she merits these honors and usurps nothing, thus showing the rare union of genius and amiability.

I can wish nothing more for her than what she has already obtained, but I renew the assurance of my affectionate devotion.

DE LESTRE POIRSON.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS.

For eight months Rachel worked with unflagging zeal under Samson's direction. A great change came over her during this time. The stunted figure grew several inches, the pale complexion became clear and healthy, the voice musical and capable of every inflection of feeling. She, as well as those surrounding her, thought the time had come for her appearance before the fastidious audience of the Rue de Richelieu. "On the 10th June," Védel tells us, "Mademoiselle Rachel, who often came to the theatre, said impatiently to me, 'I want to make my *début*, and have done with this suspense.' 'When you like,' I answered; 'will the day after to-morrow suit you?' She flushed up, and, with a look of delight I shall never forget, replied quickly, 'Yes, it will suit me.' 'In what part will you appear?' I asked her. 'In whatever you like.' 'What do you say to Camille in *Les Horaces?*' 'Very well, Camille.' 'Go, then, my child, and tell M. Samson that your *début* will be announced for the day after to-morrow.'

'But I have not got the dress.' 'Don't trouble about that, I will see to it.' Next day I took her myself what was necessary. She then lived on the sixth story at No. 23 Rue Traversière, Saint Honoré. On the 12th June, 1838, therefore, Rachel appeared at the Français, for the first time, as Camille."

Since the day when, early in 1639, Corneille's tragedy of *Les Horaces* was first acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, it had kept its place as one of the great classics of the French language. We in England find it difficult to understand the enthusiasm of Frenchmen for Corneille and Racine: the one seems hard and dry, the other but a weak echo of Euripides and Sophocles; but, as Sainte-Beuve said to the English critic who ventured to dissent from his opinion that Lamartine was a poet of very high importance, "He was important to *us*." Corneille and Racine were and are important to Frenchmen. They delight in the grandiloquent patriotism of *Les Horaces*, the high-sounding heroism of *Polyeucte*, and the overstrained honor of *Cinna*. The scene where the elder Horace parts from his son and the affianced lover of his daughter, soon to face each other in deadly strife, and ends by saying, "*Moi-même en cet adieu, j'ai les larmes aux yeux. Faites votre devoir, et laisser faire aux dieux;*" or his bitter invectives against

his third son for having, as was supposed, fled from the field, and his fierce reply to the question, "*Que voulez-vous qu'il fît contre trois?*" "*Qu'il mourut,*" had become a portion of the intellectual pabulum on which the youth of France was nourished, and stock pieces at every Academy recital; but, as Samson tells us, in the few years preceding Rachel's advent, ordinary readers had put them on the shelves of their libraries, and no longer cared to see them acted. They were fascinated by the movement, poetry, and picturesqueness of *Hernani* and *Ruy Blas*, and would not submit to the cold formality of the stereotyped temples and palaces where Orestes, Hermione, and Andromaque wandered, repeating lines and passages which, certainly, had been transmitted from generation to generation, and were still engraven on men's hearts, but from which, for stage representation, all fire seemed to have departed, now that Talma was no longer there to infuse the strength and energy of his genius into them. Corneille was wont proudly to exclaim, when the faults of his plays were pointed out to him by contemporary critics, "*Je ne suis pas moins pour cela Pierre Corneille.*" His theoretical admirers might still re-echo the boast; but the practical fact was, that since Talma's death the appearance of his name on the "affiche" meant a severe

financial loss to the Français. The horn-blasts, moonlight scenes, tapestry, armor, and brocades of the romantic drama "tickled the fancy of the town," and there was no way of obtaining a hearing for Greek and Roman warriors and heroines, dressed in the sternly simple togas and peplums designed by David. One critic, indeed, so impressed was he by the superior spectacular attractions of the new school, suggested that, as the tragedies of Racine and Corneille could not be totally eliminated from the repertory of the Théâtre Français, they ought to be represented with the costumes in fashion at the time they were written. Had it not been for the opportune appearance of Rachel, the French public might have been treated to the exhibition of Orestes and Achilles in full-bottom wigs and knee-breeches, and Iphigenia and Hermione in brocades and stomachers.

Honor and praise, therefore, are due to the "young Antigone," who stood forth alone and unaided, supporting ancient tragedy like the blind and bleeding Œdipus. On the one side was ranged, as we have said, public opinion and fashion, led by the members of the Romantic school, numbering in their ranks the names of all the greatest poets and artists of the day; on the other this insignificant, uneducated little Jewish girl, imbued with all

the courage of genius, convinced of the justice of her perceptions, undaunted by praise or blame, trampling under her little foot, not only the tenets of the Romanticists, but setting at nought all the preconceived notions of the classicists themselves. Where tradition and custom had sanctified rant, she was quiet and subdued. Where violent, quick gestures were expected, she was calm and dignified. In the celebrated imprecation launched by Camille against Rome, "*Rome l'unique objet de mon ressentiment*," instead of casting off all restraint and passionately shrieking it, as almost every actress had done hitherto, she began in a low voice, standing motionless, as though petrified to stone, and gradually mounted, step by step, gradation by gradation, to the supreme moment of anguish and despair. The public were taken by surprise; they did not know what or when to applaud, and sat stupefied, gazing at this child who thus dared to violate ancient usages. They felt there was something unconventional, something that moved them in spite of themselves, but did not consent for weeks to acknowledge that the power the young girl exercised was genius, and genius of the very highest order.

Again it was Mars who had the discrimination to appreciate the genius of the young girl who,

as a child, she had encouraged four years before. Daughter of Monval, who had acted with Talma, and herself a contemporary of Duchesnois, Rancourt, and Georges, Mars had inherited some of the greatest memories of the French stage, and could form a just appreciation of Rachel's powers. M. de Varenne relates the following incident: —

It was the day of Rachel's *début*; she was to perform Camille in *Les Horaces*. I met Mademoiselle Mars at the theatre, who said to me, "You are aware that there is a *débutante* to-day?" "Ah!" I replied, "it seems there is nothing extraordinary about her." "On the contrary, I have seen her, and I can tell you great things may be expected of her." I accompanied Mademoiselle Mars to her box; we were alone with a young man, who stood behind, and during the whole performance criticised the young actress, in the hope, of course, of gratifying the older one. When Camille appeared on the stage, Mars followed her attentively; then turning to me, she said, with a half nod and a sigh of satisfaction, "She walks the stage well." Those acquainted with theatrical criticism well know what praise was contained in these simple words, especially from the lips of Mars. Sabine addresses a few words to Camille when the latter appears on the stage. Mademoiselle Rachel had not yet opened her lips, when Mars turned to me again, and regarding me with an air of personal triumph, said, "And she listens well." Listening well is the height of art, which few actresses possess — an art as difficult, more difficult perhaps, than that of speaking well. Mademoiselle Mars was too profoundly, too delicately artistic, not to seize

with delight the slightest *nuance*. Camille spoke in her turn. She had scarcely uttered half a dozen lines, when Mars exclaimed, with an expression of relief I shall never forget, "Ah! I told you she does not declaim, she speaks!" When the famous imprecation came, instead of the classic elevation of the voice, and those noisy outbursts of grief, which carry away the audience and force applause, Mademoiselle Rachel, either through fatigue, calculation, or disdain of received traditions, uttered these words hoarsely, and with concentrated feeling, so that the public, who expected something very different, did not applaud. "Ah!" the young gentleman remarked, "she lacks strength." "But, Sir," Mademoiselle Mars exclaimed, turning sharply to him, as if stung to the quick, "surely you will allow her to recruit her strength. Are you afraid she will not grow old soon enough? She grows taller while performing, this young girl." For my own part, though far from ill-disposed to the young actress, I could not summon up such an amount of admiration, and was struck by Mademoiselle Mars' enthusiasm.

Another member of "the profession," not so eminent a one as Mademoiselle Mars, but still a competent judge, Joanny, wrote in his journal on the 16th June, 1838: "I took the part of Augustus last night; I acted well and was recalled. That little —— has something in her, however." That little —— was Mademoiselle Rachel, and the something she had in her was more than even Joanny dreamt of in his philosophy! Then comes Védel the manager's hard business-like account: "She was well received, but with no more than the usual favor

shown to beginners. The theatre was empty; it was not the fashionable time of year. Her appearance had not been heralded with the usual amount of newspaper paragraphs. No one knew Mademoiselle Rachel's name: no particular interest, therefore, was felt in this representation. She appeared, like so many others, without leaving an unfavorable impression, but, we must confess, without making anything like a success." After Camille she acted as Emilie in *Cinna*, Hermione in *Andromaque*, and Amenaïde in *Tancrède*. It was in the latter, represented on the 9th August, that Rachel first attracted public attention. The papers and placards had announced this *reprise* long before. There was a full house; a great many tickets must have been given away, since the total receipts only reached the sum of 623 francs. But she was able to appear before a larger number of spectators, of whom the majority did not even know her name. She was very much applauded in the second act, still louder at the fourth, and at the end of the piece she was enthusiastically recalled, and a bouquet and a crown were thrown to her.

"Was the impulse given?" asks Védel. "Alas! no; the amount of the receipts proves that conclusively. At this time I had serious opposition to encounter. Mademoiselle Rachel

had acted in six different parts (16th August), many more than it is the custom of the Théâtre Français to allow when an actor or actress has not had a decided success, or even a *succès de vogue*. Now she could not be said to have had this since the receipts were so low. The actress above Rachel, who had been an associate for some years, demanded that she should be allowed to take the *rôles* usually assigned to her. I must congratulate myself for having at this moment rendered a great service to the theatre and dramatic art, by refusing to listen to these pretensions, and by persevering in the appearances of the great tragedian still unknown to the public."

The appreciative manager at last reaped his reward. The press, so decisive in all theatrical and literary matters in Paris, had as yet held aloof, hardly mentioning the young artist. M. Rolle, in the *National*, certainly devoted a *feuilleton* to the appearance of three young girls, Mademoiselles Hélène Gaussin, Rabut, and Rachel. He awarded, without hesitation, the palm of beauty to Gaussin, but allowed that, in spite of many disadvantages and an unattractive exterior, Rachel was the one who impressed the public with the most idea of talent. Frédéric Soulié, who, in Janin's absence, was writing the weekly article in the *Débats*, dismissed contemp-

tuously the doings for the months of July and August at the Comédie Française with the following words: "If you wish to know what the prospects of the Français are, I can tell you that the young recruits are wretched; none seem likely to arise who will adequately replace those that are leaving." Rachel had already, when this was written, acted Camille, Emilie, and Hermione. It needed a critic more appreciative than Soulié, therefore, to draw attention to the young actress, and that critic was found in Véron, "the self-elected Mæcenas" of the French literary world, who wrote under the pseudonym of the "Bourgeois de Paris." He thus describes the impression the young actress made upon him the first time he saw her at the Français: —

One fine summer evening, June 12, 1838, seeking for shade and solitude (everything, even shade and solitude, may be found in Paris by him who seeketh diligently), I entered the Théâtre Français between 8 and 9 o'clock. There were four people in the stalls; I made the fifth. My attention was suddenly attracted to the stage by a strange and expressive countenance; the brow was prominent, the eye dark, deep-set, and full of fire; while a certain elegance and dignity in movement and attitude saved the fragile body from insignificance. A clear, musical, and above all sympathetic voice roused me at once out of my indolence and indifference. This strange countenance, this eye full of fire, this sympathetic voice, belonged

to Mademoiselle Rachel. She was acting Camille in *Les Horaces* for the first time. A crowd of confused memories swept over my brain, and at last I remembered an odd looking girl who had acted in the *Vendeuse* at the Gymnase; and I also remembered this same young girl, miserably shod and poorly clad, being asked in the corridor of the theatre "what she was doing," and answering, to my great astonishment, in a slow, serious voice, "I am pursuing my studies." I discovered in Mademoiselle Rachel that young actress who had appeared in the *Vendeuse* at the Gymnase, and the poorly clad girl who "was pursuing her studies." From that moment I became a passionate admirer of her talent. I sought my friend Merle, who generally entered into my literary enthusiasms and ideas, hoping to induce him to follow with me the career of the child I already called my little prodigy. "When the twelve or fifteen hundred men of taste and judgment who constitute public opinion in Paris," I said to him, "have heard and passed judgment on that child, she will be the glory and fortune of the Comédie Française."

In spite of the prophecy of the enthusiastic "Bourgeois de Paris," however, the select twelve or fifteen hundred, *la Clique*, in fact, did not appear, and Rachel continued to act to empty houses.

CHAPTER V.

SUCCESS.

On the 18th August Jules Janin, the all-powerful critic of the *Débats*, came back from Italy. Accounts differ very considerably as to the first visit to the Théâtre Français after his return. Édouard Thierry tells us it was Ricourt who first persuaded him to go and see Rachel. Vedel declares that he himself went and called on the great man, and begged him to do what he could for the young actress; while Véron says Janin was actually sitting in the Place Royale, when he, hearing he was there, rushed out, and, seizing hold of him, said: —

"Why are you not in the theatre?"

"I detest Turkish baths."

"Then you don't know what is taking place?"

"No; what is it?"

"Duchesnois and Rancourt are arisen from the dead."

"For what purpose?"

"Follow me, and you can judge for yourself."

Whatever may be the true story, on the 4th September Janin saw Rachel in *Les Horaces.* The theatre was almost empty. The first two acts were received coldly; the love scene in the second act made no impression; the public were still indifferent and apathetic. Suddenly the passion of the actress broke forth: —

> Que le courroux du ciel, allumé par mes vœux,
> Fasse pleuvoir sur elle un déluge de feux.

The great critic was won; when the play was over he begged to go behind the scenes to be introduced to the young Camille. Her modesty and gentleness completed the charm. Janin had a column and a half to fill the next day; he devoted it to Rachel. It was one of those *pétards*, a *tapageuse gaminerie* which at that time exercised such a disproportionate influence on the Parisian public. He wrote in his dogmatic style: —

> Let me tell you there exists at this moment, at the Théâtre Français, an unexpected victory, one of those triumphs of which a nation such as ours has reason to be proud. Those works of art, lost for so long, are at length given back to us. We possess the most marvellous actress (although only still a child) that this generation has seen on the stage. This actress is Mademoiselle Rachel. About a year ago she first appeared at the Gymnase, and I maintained then that she possessed talent of no common order, and that a great future lay

before her. I was not believed; people said I exaggerated, and I alone was not strong enough to support this little girl on that stage. A few days after her first appearance the actress disappeared from the Gymnase, and I, perhaps, was the only person who had remembered her, when suddenly she reappears at the Théâtre Français in the great tragedies of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire. Now she is listened to, encouraged, applauded. She has found the legitimate development of her precocious dramatic genius. It is nothing short of marvellous, this uneducated child, without art, without preparation of any kind, thus becoming the interpreter of our grand old tragedies! She blows their ashes into a flame by her genius and her energy; and, remember, she is small, ugly, with a narrow chest, an insignificant appearance, and common speech. Do not ask her who Tancrède, Horace, Hermione are, or about the Trojan war, or Pyrrhus, or Helen. She knows nothing; but she has that which is better than knowledge. She has that sudden illumination, which she throws around her; she grows ten inches taller on the stage; she raises her head and extends her chest; her eye brightens; she treads like a sovereign; her voice vibrates instinct with the passion that agitates her. Nothing grander can be conceived than this Camille. To my dying day I will hear that voice and see those tears. She is a priestess, a pythoness, this child of seventeen. The imprecation is the first revelation of Rachel's power. The storm raging in this grief-stricken breast is terrific. We tremble before it as before something superhuman - godlike.

This eloquent and enthusiastic article hardly produced the result that Rachel's friends had hoped for. The heat was still great; the

fashionable Parisian world was absent, and, in consequence, the theatres deserted by the cultured and refined portion of society. The Jews crowded to see their young countrywoman act, and applauded to the echo; Véron and his clique mustered strong; but the occupants of the boxes and stalls were not there, and those it was whom Janin was determined to rouse.

It would be impossible for us to form any idea of the influence exercised by Janin at the time of which we write. Paris nowadays teems with dramatic critics. If one is not favorable the next will be, and sooner or later the actor or actress possessing merit is sure to be heard; but in 1838 Janin held the sceptre of absolute power. By his brilliant, incisive, and generally correct analysis of what had taken place in the theatrical world during the week, he had gained the ear of the public, and his opinion was received with unquestioning docility.

By the end of September the audience to whom he wished to speak began to return. On the 23d of that month Rachel acted the part of Hermione in Racine's play of *Andromaque*. On the next day she awoke to find herself famous. An article appeared in the *Débats* still more eulogistic in its description of her Hermione than of her Camille. This trumpet-blast had the desired effect. The name of the little

Jewish girl, Rachel Félix, was on every one's lips; and Paris, awakened out of her lethargy, had but one thought, the progress and development of the genius that had been discovered in her midst, — one pre-occupation, the past history, and every detail concerning the private and public life of this *aigrette du café transformée en Melpomène.*

Janin took a great deal of the credit to himself, in later days, of having made Rachel famous, — "invented" her, in fact. It is impossible to deny that, until the appearance of these articles in the *Débats*, she had made no considerable stir in the artistic world, and it was not even until the second one that the great critic himself was listened to. He, perhaps, hastened the moment of her triumph, and by giving the young girl opportunely the encouragement of praise and appreciation, helped her in her venturesome task. Still there is little doubt that, as the winter season approached, and the more critical audience of the Théâtre Français returned to their accustomed places, Rachel's genius would gradually have been appreciated.

On the 27th and 29th Rachel acted in *Cinna*, on the 3d of October in *Andromaque* again, on the 5th and 9th in Racine's *Mithridate* as Monime, with an ever-increasing success, until at last popular enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Védel gives an account of these early days of Rachel's career in a pamphlet published in 1858, immediately after her death. On the 27th, the first time she appeared after the publication of Janin's second *feuilleton*, the Comédie Française was besieged by applicants for seats. It was only with difficulty they could be kept in order. The *queues* leading to the two box offices were often broken by the impatient throng outside. One extended on one side far beyond Chevet's shop, the other into the Rue St. Honoré. People waited two and three hours with feverish impatience for the opening of the ticket office, which shut again almost immediately, as most of the places had been previously sold. All this trouble and fatigue stimulated the curiosity of the public, and the same crowd appeared again next day. Her fame permeated not only Paris, but the provinces and abroad, and the receipts when she acted increased in the same ratio. On the evening of the 27th of September the money taken exceeded the previous day by a thousand francs; two days after, they were more than 4,000 francs; a fortnight after, 6,000 francs, and for a long time they were never less than 5,000 francs, and that with nothing but classical plays. She proved that Corneille and Racine could be made to pay. It is, indeed, worthy of remark that during Rachel's

engagement at the Français, classical plays were the most lucrative. As the saying was, on tragedy nights the box-office clerks at the Théâtre Français wore a comedy expression, and on comedy nights a tragedy one.

After the performance of Monime in *Mithridate*, Rachel's sixth *rôle* at the Français, the Committee presented her with its first gift, consisting of all the plays in which she had appeared, each separately and splendidly bound, with her name and the date of her first performance in the part, inscribed in golden letters on the back; and soon after they added to this a gold circlet, set with precious stones. This heaping of benefits on one of their number soon aroused the jealousy of the other associates of the theatre, and recrimination and complaints assailed the director and disturbed the harmony of every meeting of the Committee.

The upholders of Rachel declared that she had saved the Théâtre Français from irretrievable ruin; from an average of six or seven hundred francs she had raised the receipts to six thousand, and had given back to the French stage the masterpieces of the classical drama. The net receipts for the month of October had amounted to one hundred thousand francs; the increase in the profits of the theatre had risen from sixty-five to seventy thousand francs. Though a large

portion of the harvest thus made went into the pockets of the *sociétaires*, the latter were not the less disposed to find fault with the management, whom they accused of sacrificing the future prospects of the theatre to a momentary fancy on the part of the public. They urged that they would have to pay the price of the prosperity Rachel brought them; that she and her parents would soon put forward the most enormous claims; that the present large profits only meant ruin in the future; and that the precedent of thus exalting one member of the company would be disastrous in its results. Events soon proved the correctness of their plea.

Finding that Rachel's name invariably meant a house worth six thousand francs, the management felt it was impossible to leave the young girl's salary at four thousand francs, the sum originally agreed upon, and at the end of the month of October, before she asked for an increase, the sum was doubled, and a few weeks later a monthly gratification added, which gave her an income of twenty thousand francs a year.

This was more than had ever been paid to any actress before. The large salaries now given were then unknown, and these terms seemed to the Committee liberal enough to meet all the exigencies of the situation; but much

more was soon demanded. Rachel being a minor, the negotiations were conducted by her father, and his avarice and rapacity justified the prognostications of the *sociétaires*.

"This first demand for its daughter," Madame de B—— tells us, "was an increase of salary, raising it to twelve thousand francs per annum — the sum received by a Councillor of State. He then, in addition to the fixed salary of twelve thousand francs, demanded from three hundred to five hundred francs perquisites (*jeux*) each time she played, according as the receipts of the theatre varied from four thousand to five thousand francs and upwards; the title of *Sociétaire*, with a full share, with twelve thousand francs from the subvention, and four months *congé* every year. The whole claim might be computed at from fifty to sixty thousand francs a year."

The managers were thunderstruck; a portion of the press sided against Rachel, and Jules Janin declared that he, who had "created" her, would destroy his own "pen work," and relegate her to the obscurity from which he had raised her. He chose to make a personal question of her fight with the Théâtre Français. Here was the little girl whom he had made famous, daring, without his advice or permission, to set forth claims which were untenable and preposterous. The great critic had hitherto been justified, by

results, in saying that he could make or unmake any actor or actress on the Parisian stage. Though despotic, he was not mercenary. Unlike many of his fraternity, no bribe was ever accepted by him, and no "chicken and champagne" influenced his praise or blame; but he expected due deference to be paid to his position and power, and revenged himself unscrupulously on those who did not pay court to him. An amusing instance of this is given in Fechter's life. Janin invited Fechter to come and see him. The independent actor did not do so. The *feuilleton* that followed the *reprise* of *Les Horaces* and *Le Mentiur*, in which Fechter was to have appeared, but which he threw up, contained a savage onslaught on Curiace and Dorante. The actor had the critic in his power, but simply wrote the following private note:

DEAR JANIN, — Your criticism is excellent: true in every particular, except in attributing the acting of Curiace and Dorante to me. *I performed in neither part!*

In the next week's issue the impartial critic stated that, owing to gross carelessness, his manuscript had been misprinted; his remarks on the subject of M. Fechter were intended for his rehearsal, and not for the performance, in which other artists had appeared. It was quite evident from this second statement that Janin meant war to the knife; so Fechter returned the

blow by publicly stating that, as he had never rehearsed the parts, the explanation could hardly be called satisfactory. After this terrible and justifiable *exposé*, what was left for Janin but silence? And silence was his enduring revenge.

Since first this all-powerful despot had espoused her cause, all had gone well with Rachel; but now she, or, rather, her father in her person, had offended him by acting without his advice, and by flagrantly infringing upon the interests of those who were associated with her. She was destined, therefore, to receive the first rebuff in her artistic career, to feel the first check of disapprobation which, a few years later, secure of her authority, the great tragedian would have treated with indifference, but which now seemed to her of exaggerated importance. The moment to test her true power over that public which, her detractors declared, had only been brought to her feet by a *clique* of critics and the partiality of her co-religionists the Jews, had come at last.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT TRAGEDIAN.

On the 23d November, 1838, Rachel appeared as Roxane in Racine's tragedy of *Bajazet*. She had already undertaken six different classical *rôles* on the stage of the Théâtre Français: Camille in *Les Horaces*, Emilie in *Cinna*, Hermione in Racine's *Andromaque*, Aménaïde in Voltaire's *Tancrède*, Eryphile in Racine's *Iphigénie*, and Monime in Racine's *Mithridate*. Roxane, next to Phèdre, is the most difficult of Racine's heroines to portray. She is a slave in love with a man who despises her, and threatens him with death if he refuse to forsake her rival Atalide for her sake.

"The desire to hear her in this new part," Védel tells us, "was enormous." The mob struggled at the door, and the receipts rose to more than six thousand francs. But the actress had no success, and even the famous "*Sortez!*" was received in sullen silence by the public. When, at the beginning of her career, she had acted night after night to empty

houses, Rachel, filled with determination and impelled by the strong artistic instinct within her, had been unconcerned and fearless; now, that the tide of success had set in, she was overwhelmed with nervousness every time she undertook a new *rôle*. Rose, her servant, who knew her better than any one, would enumerate all the symptoms of that disease called "stage fright," from which her mistress suffered on "first nights:" inability to speak or move, her hands cold and trembling, perspiration running down her face, a nervous irritability that was most trying to those around her. The critics, in consequence, often pronounced a part a perfect failure that, after several representations, was numbered among her greatest triumphs. So it was now. She did not act nearly up to her usual average, and the coldness of the audience completed her discomfiture. They had heard of the enormous demands made by her father, and wreaked their displeasure on the young girl, destined all her life, like the Roxane she impersonated, to be the plaything of that tyrant, the Public, and the slave of those who sought to enrich themselves by her popularity and her genius. The very *claque* paid by the opposition did not applaud, while the critics showed that she could expect no support from them. Her enemies were triumphant, her

friends depressed, and every one believed the moment prophesied by the *sociétaires* had really come. "The public was weary of its new toy." Védel, at the end of his resources, went to see Janin, hoping to modify his judgment, and induce him to treat the young actress with more leniency. Critic and manager were discussing the subject, when Rachel was announced; she was evidently nervous and embarrassed, and hung her head like a criminal before his judge. Janin received her with the greatest kindness, and calmed her somewhat, but confessed that, in spite of all the affection he felt for her, and the interest he took in her career, it was impossible to give a favorable account of her acting in Roxane. Poor Rachel sobbed bitterly; Janin did all he could to console her, but insisted that she should not appear in the part again.

"On this point we were not agreed," Védel tells us. "'I accept all the responsibility,' I said to him; 'the *rôle* was chosen by me, therefore blame ought to rest on me alone, and I am prepared to bear the brunt of defeat.' We left him, very ill-pleased with the result of our visit. I felt convinced, however, that Rachel would remain firm under the rebuff. We had hardly got into the cab before I said, 'Never mind, my child, no hesitation; and in spite of all you have just heard, *Bajazet* the day after to-morrow.'

"Conquered, at least apparently, by my pertinacity, Rachel promised to accede to my wishes. I took her home and returned to the theatre.

"At 4 o'clock Félix was announced. He informed me, with the greatest determination, that his daughter should not play *Bajazet* the next day.

"'Why?' I asked.

"'Because I have made up my mind not to allow it.'

"'You forget, Monsieur, that under the terms of her engagement Mademoiselle Rachel has bound herself to appear in all her parts, according to the orders of the director.'

"'I repeat,' he said, 'that she shall not act.'

"'I warn you, Monsieur, that the second representation of *Bajazet* will be announced for the day after to-morrow; and you may be sure that if Mademoiselle Rachel is not in her dressing-room by 6 o'clock on the evening of that day, I will give the public back their money, assigning as a reason the refusal of your daughter to fulfil her engagements. The approximate value of the representation will also be deducted from her salary, and she shall not set her foot on the stage of the theatre until she shall have acted *Bajazet* for the second time.'

"'You can do what you like; she shall not act.'

"'Would you be good enough to withdraw, Monsieur? I have nothing more to say.' With which request he complied."

Immediately after this scene, Védel wrote Rachel an imploring letter, laying stress on all the personal and other reasons which could induce her not to follow her father's injunctions, and throw away her future so recklessly.

"I sent one of the boys about the theatre," he writes, "with orders to take this letter, and give it only to Rachel in person, to wait for her, whatever hour at night she returned, and to bring the answer to me at the theatre, where I had determined to wait. At 1 o'clock in the morning the boy brought me the following line, scribbled in pencil, on a scrap of paper, which I have kept religiously: —

Ne suis je pas à vos ordres? Quand on aime les gens, on fait tout pour *leurs* plaire. Tout à vous,

RACHEL.

Meantime, on the very day of the second representation, November 26th, appeared an account of the fatal evening, in the *Débats*. It was remorseless and cruel: —

How could Mademoiselle Rachel be expected to fill the *rôle* of Roxane? How could she, a child, comprehend a passion so entirely of the senses, not of the soul? Only an actress with all the experience and vicissitudes of a varied career behind her could hope to grasp such a

conception. But here we see a half-developed child, with none of the requisites, clear voice, walk, or bearing, put forward to act a part in which lust, energy, and violence rule supreme. . . . This delicate girl, this puny overtasked frame, this undeveloped bosom, this troubled tone, could these suffice to represent the stalwart lioness whom we call Roxane? Mademoiselle Rachel appeared, and in an instant the house felt she was unequal to the task. This was not the Roxane of the poet; it was a young girl wandering in the "Seraglio."

So Janin went on in the same strain for two columns, so crushingly antagonistic, that Vedel almost made up his mind to yield and defer for some time the second representation of *Bajazet*.

On further reflection, however, he resolved to keep to his point, if Rachel were not too discouraged by the judgment pronounced so pitilessly.

"The evening came. She arrived punctually. Shortly before the moment of her appearance, I went up to her dressing-room; she was ready, and looked superb in her costume.

"'Well, my child, how do you feel?' I asked her.

"'Determined to do my best. I have had my way, but not without a terrible struggle,' she answered, smiling. 'I think it will go better this evening.'

"'You are not afraid?'

"'Not in the least.'

"'I like this confidence; it is a good omen. You have read Janin's article?'

"'Yes; he polishes me off nicely *'il m'habille joliment'*. But wait; I will serve him out.'"

The young actress reaped the reward of her courage. She was victorious all along the line. Her success far surpassed anything she had yet achieved. Recalled innumerable times, she was received with frenzied acclamations of applause, while the attendants were obliged to carry away the heaps of flowers that were showered on her. After the termination of the piece Védel went behind the scenes at once to congratulate the Roxane of the evening; but already her room, that had been nearly deserted after the first representation of *Bajazet*, was so crowded that she could hardly make her way towards him through the crowd. Throwing herself into his arms, she whispered, "Thank you, my dear friend; I knew you were right."

From this day forth Rachel had no further need to fear her enemies or seek the suffrages of her friends. *Elle dominait son parterre.* That supreme tribunal in all questions of dramatic art, the public, unmoved by favoritism or prejudice, knew nothing of Classicism or Romanticism. Once touched, they cared no longer for the interests of the *sociétaires*, the rapacity of Félix, or the susceptibility of Janin. They only

recognized that this girl gave expression to the thoughts and words sanctified by tradition, and compelled them to smile and weep when she chose. From that moment her authority was supreme. Regardless of tenets or schools, they proclaimed her queen by the right divine of her genius. It is true that, like all kings and queens crowned by the mobile, changeable, passionate race she ruled, she was worshipped and implicitly obeyed at times, and at others decried and calumniated; but that was in later years, when she, perhaps by her own capriciousness and tyranny, had exhausted the not very long-suffering patience of her subjects. Now, if a cloud did dim the sunshine of her popularity for an instant, it melted away under the influence of her fascination and consummate dramatic power. She not only ruled on the stage, but in social circles. The great ladies of the Faubourg Saint Germain chose to caress and make much of her; and she who had gone about singing for her daily bread, half-clothed and ill-fed, and who had stood many a night eating fried potatoes under a column outside the Salle Molière, was a match in bearing and manner for any duchess in Paris. Dr. Véron says, not without hidden satire: "What taste and tact were required to enable her to bear with dignity this sudden transition from obscurity to splendor, from misery to filling the position of

the spoiled child of fortune! This society, which later exaggerated her faults and accused her unjustly of many things, only chose at the beginning of her career to see perfection in every act, and a heart above all the evil sentiments and violent passions which she knew so well how to portray. The success which Mademoiselle Rachel obtained in the drawing-rooms of the great, the favor full of tenderness which she knew how to win from distinguished women of the world, can only be explained by the rare qualities — I do not say of the *actress*, but of a young girl who was *spirituelle*, amiable, and always mistress of herself." Her social perception was instinctive. She who a few hours before had held hundreds rapt, watching every smile and frown, and hanging on every word she spoke, now retired and entrenched herself behind the most charming repose and reserve of manner, never venturing to assert her superior intellectual powers, or obtrude her personality in any way. Her taste in dress was exquisite, simple, unostentatious, but perfect in every detail. Théodore de Banville, the poet, says: "Her most marvellous creation was neither Hermione, nor Phèdre, nor Thisbé. It was that *chef d'œuvre* worthy of Balzac and Gavarni, Rachel Parisienne." In her grace, in her distinction, she was essentially well-bred, essentially refined; and this is not

the least proof of the largeness and versatility of her genius.

The great and powerful of the land vied with one another to do her honor. Louis Philippe, who had not been once to the theatre since his accession, paid several visits to see her act. One evening, after performing before His Majesty, she was presented to him at the conclusion of the tragedy. The King took her trembling hand in his, and assured her that every time he saw her it was with increased pleasure. In her confusion the young actress addressed him simply as "Monsieur." On being afterwards blamed for it by her companion, she replied that, "being in the habit of conversing only with the Kings of Greece and Rome, she was ignorant of the form of speech used towards the monarchs of her day." On the following morning His Majesty sent her a thousand-franc note, his first gift to any actor or actress. Great as were the honors heaped upon her by royalty all her life, Rachel ever remained one of the people at heart. A night or two after her interview with Louis Philippe, a friend of hers was eye-witness of the following scene: —

Mademoiselle Rachel was leaving the Théâtre des Italiens during a representation; the carriage was coming up. She was on the point of putting her foot on the step, when a little girl selling oranges, recognizing her, called

out with that mocking tone of voice common to the street Arab, male and female. "Ah, Rachel, Rachel!" The tragedian stopped, turned, and answered gayly in the same tone, "Tiens c'est autre!" then, assuming her natural voice, "My dear child," she added, "are you selling much?" Without waiting for an answer she threw a gold piece amongst the oranges. The little girl poured forth her thanks, and, bending down, picked up some rose leaves Rachel had let fall from a bouquet she held. She told me afterwards she valued the homage paid by this child in her rags more than half the adulation received from the cultured audience who came nightly to do her honor.

Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, all united to do Rachel honor in those days. When she appeared in public she was fêted. When she assisted at the sittings of the Chamber of Deputies, as was the custom for the great ladies of the day, she attracted universal attention from speakers and audience. In one of her brilliant articles that appeared periodically in *La Presse*, Madame de Girardin alludes to Rachel's social success:—

Mademoiselle Rachel appeared to-day at the Chamber of Deputies and then at a Ministerial Ball, receiving at both places the most marked homage and attention. Are these signs of favor that the Parisian world show Mademoiselle Rachel accorded to her talent? to her character? No, they are accorded to her rank. You start! But there are different sorts of rank—social rank and natural rank. Not only does nature bestow by her gifts a rank, but that rank is a vocation.

And so the brilliant and clever lady goes on to prove that Rachel possessed the only true kind of rank; and she and Emile de Girardin gave evidence of the consistency of their opinions by entertaining the actress continually at their hospitable table, and when many others later held aloof, ever remained equally cordial and friendly.

Rachel was admitted, at this time, into the exclusive circle at the Abbaye aux Bois, where Madame Récamier, although no longer rich, beautiful, or young, succeeded in keeping a large circle of illustrious and respectful admirers — *La réunion des refusés!* as profane outsiders called it; but which was looked upon by those admitted to the sacred precincts of the old convent as the tribunal of art and æstheticism. Here Rachel met Châteaubriand, and listened to the chapters of the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* read aloud by the author. The young actress astonished and charmed these apostles of culture by her simple dignity, unassuming manner, and ready wit. When introduced to Châteaubriand, the venerable poet said to her in a melancholy tone, "How sad it is to think, Mademoiselle, that such as you should be born as we are about to die." "Sir," she replied, "there are some who never die."

On one of these literary afternoons, which were of frequent occurrence at the Abbaye aux

Bois, Rachel had been requested by Madame Récamier to recite the celebrated scene from Corneille's *Polyeucte:*—

> Mon époux, en mourant, m'a laissé ses lumières;
> Son sang, dont tes bourreaux viennent de me couvrir,
> M'a dessillé les yeux, et me les vient d'ouvrir:
> Je vois, je sais, je crois!

As she spoke the lines, the Archbishop of —— was announced.

"Monseigneur," said Madame Récamier, slightly embarrassed, "allow me to present Mademoiselle Rachel, who was good enough to recite some verses of *Polyeucte* for our benefit."

"I should be sorry to interrupt Corneille's poetry by my prose; pray continue," said His Eminence.

Unwilling, as a Jewess, to speak the words, "Je vois, je sais, je crois," before a Christian prelate, Rachel replied, diffidently, "If Monseigneur will allow me, I should prefer to recite some verses of Racine's *Esther*."

When the young girl had finished, the Archbishop addressed her in terms of the highest praise.

"We priests," he added, "are not often allowed the pleasure of meeting great artistes. Twice, however, in my life I have had that privilege. At Florence I heard Madame Malibran sing in a drawing-room, and I now owe to our hostess

the pleasure of hearing Mademoiselle Rachel. To recite as I heard you when I entered, you must have felt deeply the pathos of the situation."

Mademoiselle Rachel made a graceful courtesy, and answered with downcast eyes, "Monseigneur, *je crois!*"

Nothing was talked of next day but the renunciation of the faith of her fathers, which, it was averred, the young Jewess had made.

Madame Lenormand, in her *Memoires de Madame Récamier*, describes Rachel as she was at this time:—

> Whoever had not heard and seen Mademoiselle Rachel in a drawing-room can only form an incomplete idea of her feminine attractions, and of her talent as an actress. Her features, a little too delicate for the stage, gained much by being seen nearer. Her voice was a little hard; but her accent was enchanting, and she modulated it to suit the limits of a room with marvellous instinct. Her deportment was in irreproachable taste; and the ease and promptitude with which this young girl, without education or knowledge of good society, seized its manner and tone, was certainly the perfection of art. Deferential with dignity, modest, natural, and easy, she talked delightfully of her art and her studies. Her success in society was immense.

Rachel's private life at this time was in strange contrast to the brilliancy of her success. The Félix family were living at No. 27, Rue

Traversière Saint Honoré, since named Rue de la Fontaine Molière. Nothing could be imagined more sordid than all the surroundings. A dining-room containing a table and a few chairs; the bedroom of the father and mother; and a kitchen, the superintendence of which fell to Rachel's share, she being the one who had always undertaken the cooking of the establishment. From the kitchen a steep staircase led to an attic in which were three small beds. In one of these slept Rebecca and Lia, in the other Raphael, and in the third Rachel with her youngest sister Dinah, then three years old. When not employed in the preparation of the family meals, or in the education of her sister, the young girl spent her time in this attic, lying on her little bed, studying the masterpieces of Corneille and Racine.

We have a most amusing account of a visit paid by an intimate friend to the Rue Traversière. He found the young tragedian, who by her extraordinary genius had turned the heads of all Paris, in the little kitchen preparing the vegetables for the family *pot-au-feu*. At intervals she stopped peeling the potatoes and scraping the carrots, to reprove and silence the younger children, who had been left in her charge during her mother's absence. When they were more than usually incorrigible, she solemnly laid down

the knife and potato, and administered condign punishment to one of them. This done, she returned to her occupation and the subject she was discussing, as if nothing had happened.

We do not wish in any way to underestimate the advantages Rachel derived from the dramatic training she obtained from Saint Aulaire and Samson; but there is little doubt that these hours spent studying what she was afterwards to personate, studying also at an age that is eminently receptive, and at which ideas and images are formed which remain unmodified and unchanged in after life, was one of the secrets of her unconventionality and originality. The intellect of youth is despotic and obstinate in its enthusiasms and views. So I see it, and so it shall be, is the usual attitude of the youthful mind; and if it have the second sight of sensibility, its instincts and impulses are better than any drilling, or teaching of ancient methods.

Rachel not only possessed this inner sensibility, she had also the power of observing external events, and fusing them into her ideal existence, thus collecting materials which, when they were welded into place and received her individual expression, became "points" with which she electrified her audience. In proof of this, the following incident is related as having suggested the by-play that is so effective in the

rôle of Camille, when listening to the description of the combat between the Horatii and the Curiatii.

One morning, knocked up by her exertions of the evening before, the young actress had remained in bed. Hearing a caller down below, she rose and went to the door, to ascertain who it was; she recognized the voice as that of an acquaintance of the family, a young medical student. In answer to the question put by her mother and sisters, as to why he had been so long absent, he told a fearful story of some accident, while dissecting, that had necessitated the amputation of his hand. Rachel, already tired and over-excited, was so overcome with horror at this description, that she fainted. The noise of her fall brought the family to her assistance, and she soon recovered. It was then the idea occurred to her that if she, who was not particularly interested in this young man, had been so much impressed by the narrative of his accident, how terrible must be the shock on the nerves of a woman hearing of her lover's death. She told Samson that the next time she played Camille, she would introduce a new effect. She did so, and we know by hearsay how great was her success.

These early years of Rachel's success were undoubtedly the happiest of her life: years of

privation and struggle and doubt, but years also of appreciation and success. The words she had conned over and studied with youthful reverence in the solitude of her garret room, she was now able to speak to hundreds every night, and to catch inspiration from their comprehension and applause. Under the dictation of none but her own genius, she had as a child selected the heroic masterpieces of the early French tragedians as the mouthpiece of her genius, and in an age when Romanticism, extravagance, and rodomontade were at their height, the young priestess stepped forth, and lit the sacred fire on altars grown dim and cold, bringing Frenchmen's hearts back to the worship of what is truest and best in their country's literature. Poor, ill-fed, ill-taught, she had never swerved from her great ideal; and now that she was the idol of the town, overwhelmed with admiration and homage, she did not allow herself to relax in her efforts. If the performance did not come up to her own standard, she tested and tried her effects over and over again, with different poses and gestures. For three years she studied Phèdre, and for those three years she never played it twice alike. Ever endeavoring to attain what she considered the highest goal, with a mind sensitively alive to beauty of expression and form, and a marvellous power of imparting that

perception to others, she never appealed to the lower passions of her audience, but strove to exalt her audience to her own level. In reading the strange, sad history of this woman, shall all these years of honest endeavor and love of art for art's sake count as nothing when weighed in the balance in which her detractors have meted out her merits and demerits so unmercifully?

George Sand, with her liberal mind and sympathetic heart, said of Rachel: "I was not personally acquainted with her, but I know that she ever worshipped and strove towards the great and true in Art; and what better religion can any of us profess than that?"

CHAPTER VII.

POET AND ACTRESS.

In the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for the 1st December, 1838, there appeared, in a defence of Mademoiselle Rachel's representation of the character of Roxane, these words: —

The Théâtre Français is again giving *Bajazet*: Mademoiselle Rachel is acting the part of Roxane; if I mistake not, it is her sixth appearance in a new *rôle*. Dramatic criticism, which has been extremely indulgent and (still more rare) extremely just, has shown this time unexpected severity towards the young artist. About eight papers, written on the same day by people of taste and discrimination, are dissatisfied with her acting, and look upon her failure as a decisive condemnation of her talent and Racine's genius. I was present the first night, and returned a second, conscientiously determined to solve the problem. I came away more mystified than ever. Roxane seems to me, after Hermione, to be the *rôle* in which Mademoiselle Rachel shows to most advantage, and, to judge by appearances, my opinion is shared by the greater portion of the audience. I think it unnecessary, for reasons that must be obvious, to attempt here a dissertation on Racine. I will only touch upon the powers of the actress who interprets him. We have only to see her and hear her, to know she has studied the part. Does

she exhibit less heart or less intelligence? is she feebler, less inspired, or more nervous? or does she look smaller than a month ago, in the magnificent dress of Hermione? I think, perhaps, this last is the most serious fault to be found in Mademoiselle Rachel; she is not tall enough: and this is, alas! an irremediable fault. In the fourth act of *Bajazet*, during the monologue, I heard some one in the pit exclaim, "What a little devil!" The individual who thus expressed his feelings did not know that he was giving a masterly analysis of what most of us felt, and that his exclamation was worth columns of newspaper criticism.

Criticism has rights that none dare to dispute; if some complain of it, others profit by it. It is a real power, one of the greatest of the day. When a young girl appears for the first time, full of fear rather than hope; when the public, who seldom find out anything for themselves, allow her to play, entirely unsupported, tragedies they have given up going to see; and when the artist, alone, unknown, but faithful to her ideal, reveals her talent courageously, without thinking who is there, nor who is listening to her; then those critics who force the public to come against their prejudices and wishes play a noble part. Why undo, therefore, now, the good that has been done? Why seek to stifle and discourage the talent you have endeavored to foster? It is not fair, and we the public, protest. The young artist belongs no longer to you; it is no longer she personally which is in question, but the art she is reviving — immortal, glorious delight of all humanity. Do not you feel that in reading your criticisms, this child, to whom immeasurable gratitude is due, this child who is not sure of herself, and who, in spite of her precocious genius, is not invulnerable to the shafts aimed against her, this young girl, who plays

Hermione, and who understands and interprets Racine as we have seen her understand and interpret it, may be wounded to tears; for this reason, and for this alone, it seems that, however small one's influence may be, one ought to protect and defend her as much as possible, and, above all, one ought to abstain from destroying the divine spark in the heart of this child, the heavenly seed which must sooner or later bear fruit.

The author of this eloquent remonstrance was Alfred de Musset, the poet, then in the zenith of his talent and fame.

One evening in the following month of May the susceptible poet met the young actress leaving the Français, where she had been acting *Tancrède* to a large and enthusiastic audience. She invited him, with some other friends who accompanied her, to come to supper. A curious account of this supper, written to Madame Jaubert, his *marraine*, is published in De Musset's *Posthumous Works*: —

After we had arrived at the house, Rachel discovered that she had forgotten her rings and bracelets at the theatre. She sent the only servant of the establishment to fetch them; no one was left, therefore, to cook the supper! Rachel rose and disappeared into the kitchen. A quarter of an hour afterwards she returned in a dressing-gown and night-cap, a foulard handkerchief tied under her chin, looking beautiful; in her hand she held a dish, on which were three pieces of beefsteak that she had cooked herself. She placed the dish in the middle of the table, saying, "Help yourselves." Then she returned

to the kitchen, and presently reappeared, a soup-tureen full of smoking soup in one hand, in the other a saucepan containing spinach. That was our supper, no plates or spoons: the servant had taken the keys with her. Rachel opened the buffet, found a salad-bowl full of salad, took the wooden spoon, fished out a fork from somewhere, and began eating. "But," said her mother, who was hungry, "there are tin plates in the kitchen."

De Musset then goes on to detail the conversation that takes place between Rachel, her mother, and sister; Rachel making fun of Sarah because she considered herself too fine to eat off tin.

"Figure to yourself," says Rachel, addressing the poet, "when I was acting at the Théâtre Molière, I had only two pairs of stockings, and every morning — " Here Sarah began to chatter German, so as to interrupt her sister. Rachel, however, went on: "No German here! Why should she be ashamed! I had only two pairs of stockings, as I told you, and I was obliged to wash one pair every morning — it hung in my room on a string while I wore the other!"

"And you did the housekeeping?" I asked.

Rachel. — "I rose at six o'clock every day, and by eight o'clock all the beds were made. Then I went to the market to buy the dinner."

I. — "Were you extravagant?"

Rachel. — "No, I was a very honest cook. Was I not, Mamma?"

The Mother (her mouth full). — "Yes."

Rachel. — "Only once I robbed for a month; when I had bought four sous worth of goods, I put down five,

and when I had paid ten sous I put down twelve. At the end of the month I found myself the happy possessor of three francs."

I (severely). — "And what did you do with those three francs, Mademoiselle?"

The Mother (seeing that Rachel was silent). — "Monsieur, she bought Molière's works."

I. — "Really!"

Rachel. — "Yes. I already had a Corneille and a Racine; I wanted Molière. I bought it with my three francs and then confessed my sins."

Meantime, the other guests began to drop off. The servant returned with the jewels, four or five thousand francs worth: bracelets, rings, crowns. She laid them on the table among the salad, spinach, and tin plates. I, thinking of the housekeeping, bedmaking, and all the duties of straitened circumstances, took the opportunity of looking at Rachel's hands, fearing to find them ugly and coarse; they were, on the contrary, white, soft, and slender — the hands of a princess.

Some punch was made, and after some more laughing and talking, the character of the scene suddenly changed. A word was sufficient to call out the poetry and artistic instinct hidden for the time being under her childish playful manner.

I. — "How you read the letter this evening! You were very much moved."

Rachel. — "Yes. I felt as if something within me were going to break; but still I do not care for the piece (*Tancrède*). It is artificial."

I. — "You prefer Corneille and Racine?"

Rachel. — "Ah! I adore Racine; everything he writes is so true, so fine, so noble."

I. — "Do you remember, some time ago, receiving an

anonymous letter on the subject of the last scene of Racine's *Mithridate?*"

Rachel. — "Certainly. I followed the advice given, and since then am always applauded in this scene. Do you know who it was who wrote to me?"

I. — "Yes, very well; it was the woman who has the largest mind and smallest foot in Paris.[1] What part are you studying now?"

Rachel. — "We are to play *Mary Stuart* this summer, and then *Polyeucte*, and perhaps ——"

I. — "Well?"

Rachel (putting down her little fist emphatically on the table). — "I *will* play Phèdre: they tell me I am too young, I am too thin, and a hundred other stupidities; I answer, it is Racine's finest conception. I am determined to play it. If they say I am too young and the *rôle* is not suitable, was it not the same with Roxane? If they think I am too thin, I maintain it is nonsense. A woman nourishing an unholy passion, but who would rather face death than give herself up to it — a woman devoured by grief and love — would not have a chest like Madame Paradol. It would be utterly inconsistent to expect it. I have read the *rôle* ten times in the last eight days. I do not know how I will act it, but I can tell you how I feel it. The critics, the newspapers, the public, no one shall make me give it up. Instead of encouraging me and helping me, they invent things to injure and annoy me. Yes, I have read sincere and conscientious articles; there is nothing better for the artist, but there are others who

[1] George Sand was always said to have the largest mind and smallest foot of any woman in Paris. Five years before the scene described here, Alfred de Musset made his famous journey to Venice with the authoress of *Lélia*.

kill one's soul with pin-pricks. I should like to poison them."

The Mother. — "My dear, you have done nothing but talk all day. You were up at six, and you played this evening. You will be ill."

Rachel (quickly). — "No; leave me alone. I tell you it gives me new life. (Turning towards me) — Shall I go and fetch the book? We will read the piece together."

I. — "Certainly, nothing could be more delightful."

She rose and went, shortly returning with the volume of Racine in her hand. There was something solemn and religious in her walk — like a priestess carrying the sacred vessels to the altar. She sat down beside me and snuffed the candle. The mother went to sleep smiling. Rachel opened the book almost with awe, and bending over it said, "How I delight in this man! When once I put my nose into this book, I could willingly remain without food or drink for days." We began to read *Phèdre*, the book lying on the table between us. At first she recited in a monotonous tone like a litany. By degrees she became more animated. We exchanged remarks, ideas, on every passage. At last we reached the great scene. She stretched out her right arm on the table, her head resting on her left hand, and gave herself up to her emotion. Still she only spoke in an undertone. Fatigue, excitement, the lateness of the hour, an almost feverish agitation that colored the little cheeks, surrounded by the night-cap, red and white by turns, some charm that emanated from her, those brilliant eyes challenging my criticism, a childish smile that irradiated her features, the table covered with dishes, the flickering flame of the candle, the mother asleep close to us — all made a picture worthy of Rembrandt, a chapter of romance worthy of Wilhelm

Meister, and a memory of my artistic life which I shall never forget.

At last half-past twelve struck. Her father came in from the opera where he had gone to see Mademoiselle Nathan make her first appearance in *La Juive*. He addressed one or two irritable sentences to his daughter, telling her to stop reading. Rachel shut the book, saying, under her breath, "It is disgusting I will buy a candle and read alone in my bed." I looked at her; great tears stood in her eyes. It was indeed disgusting to see such a creature treated in so coarse a manner. I rose and took my leave, full of admiration, respect, and tenderness.

I sit down and send you, with the exactitude of a shorthand writer, all the details of this wonderful evening, thinking that perhaps you will keep them, and that posterity one day will read them.

After this supper a friendship sprang up between the poet and the actress. He undertook to write a tragedy in five acts for her, and determined to take his subject from the early history of France. "For days," as his brother tells us in his biography, "Alfred's table was covered with volumes of Thierry's and Sismondi's, and he at last fixed on the story of Frédégonde and Chilperic, calling it *La Servante du Roi*."

The details of this piece were never completed; the outline, as told by the old chroniclers, is this:—

Frédégonde insinuates herself into the confidence of Andovère, Chilperic's first wife, and

by her coquetry and pretended modesty becomes possessed of the good graces and heart of the King. So great is her influence, that she induces him to repudiate the Queen, hoping to succeed to the crown herself. Deceived in her expectations by Chilperic's second marriage with Galsuinde, she yields to the King's love, becomes his mistress, and heaps every possible humiliation and insult on the new Queen. At the beginning of the fourth act, Galsuinde has resolved to secretly leave the court and to return to her father. Frédégonde, informed of her intention, deliberates if she should assassinate her or let her flee.

This monologue and the succeeding scene with the King are the only portions ever written.

We can see here and there, in the account Frédégonde gives of her youth and girlhood, a certain reflex of Rachel's earliest years, and the impression that the contempt with which her nationality was treated had made on her.

> Dans ce sombre palais j'ai reçu la naissance,
> J'en suis sortie un jour, le cœur plein d'espérance ;
> J'ai voulu voir de près ce que j'osai rêver.
> J'ai vu ; ma mère attend, je vais la retrouver.
> Tel sera mon asile.
>
> . . . . .

We can imagine the tone of voice with which Rachel uttered the words "J'ai vu."

Mes sœurs, mes pauvres sœurs, ô comble de misère,
Vont au seuil des châteaux meurtrier pour leur mère,
Et chanter au hasard, les larmes dans les yeux,
Ces vieux refrains gaulois si chers à vos aïeux !

. . . . .

Ces barbares, Seigneur, sont plus fiers qu'on se pense.
Ils ne se montrent pas pour un morceau de pain;
Leur visage est voilé lorsqu'ils tendent la main.

And the King answers —

Qu'ils gardent donc en paix cet orgueil solitaire,
Qui les fait exiler du reste de la terre !

Alfred de Musset took the fragment to her in the summer of 1830. She was apparently delighted with it, and recited it several times to small circles of intimate friends. She did not urge the poet, however, to complete his work, but seemed bent rather on the production of *Polyeucte* and *Phèdre*. Time passed. Alfred was pressed by the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for more work, and, being in want of money, he put away the MS. of *La Servante du Roi* and directed his energies to the completion of some short tales, to meet his most immediate debts. Enthusiasm on both sides cooled. The story told in Paris at the time was that Alfred de Musset, being invited to supper by Rachel to discuss some of the details of the piece, went to the Café de la Régence beforehand to play a game of chess,

and there, as was alas! often the case, forgot the engagement and his better self. "*Il s'absinthe — lisez: s'absente.*" Such was the joke made at his expense next day.

Alfred addressed some stanzas to her on this occasion; they were never, however, sent, and were found among his papers long afterwards:

Si ta bouche ne doit rien dire
De ces vers désormais sans prix;
Si je n'ai pour être compris,
Ni tes larmes ni ton sourire;

Si dans ta voix, si dans tes traits,
Ne vit plus le feu qui m'anime;
Si le noble cœur de Monime
Ne doit plus savoir mes secrets;

Si ta triste lettre est signée;
Si les gardiens d'un vieux tombeau
Laissent leur prêtresse indignée
Sortir, emportant son flambeau;

Cette langue de ma pensée,
Que tu connais, que tu soutiens,
Ne sera jamais prononcée
Par d'autres accents que les tiens.

Périsse plutôt ma mémoire
Et mon beau rêve ambitieux!
Mon génie était dans ta gloire;
Mon courage était dans tes yeux.

When they met again it was at a supper given by Buloz, editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Alfred wrote to his brother, then in Italy: —

February, 1843.

I add a few lines to my mother's letter in answer to your question. I dined at Buloz on Shrove Thursday. All the Review was there, with Rachel as outsider. It was as stiff as a diplomatic dinner. Henri Heine found the bean, but pretended not to know what was expected of him, so that the cake which was to have been the great point of the evening turned out as heavy as lead.[1] Mercifully, Chandes-Aigues got drunk, which broke the ice a little. Rachel asked me with so conciliating or coquettish an expression, if "we were still fighting," that I replied, "Why did you not ask me that three years ago? You know that I am not rancorous, and our quarrel would have blown over at once." She looked at me still more coquettishly, exclaiming, "How much time lost!" and we shook hands as good friends. Rachel has invited me to come and see her; I go every Thursday. That is the whole story.

[1] It is noteworthy that Heine is one of the few great artists who saw Rachel and refused her the tribute of his admiration. "I find in the matter of talent," he says, "a great similarity between Herr Felix Mendelssohn and Mademoiselle Rachel Felix, the tragic artist. Peculiar to both is a severe, a very serious severeness — a decided, nearly unfortunate, attachment to classic models, the purest, most talented power of calculation, sharpness of understanding, and, in fine, a total want of *naïveté*." Is there, however, in art such a thing as original genius without *naïveté*? Up till now there has been no occurrence of an example of it.

The sequel is thus told by Paul de Musset in the Biography he wrote of his brother: —

> One day, in the April of 1849, Rachel had invited him (Alfred) to dinner. The other guests were all men of position and rank. During dinner, the person seated on the left of the mistress of the house remarked a beautiful ring that she wore. The ring was immediately passed round, all expressing their admiration. "Messieurs," said Rachel, "since this trifle pleases you, I will put it up to auction. How much will you give for it?" One of the guests offered five hundred francs, another a thousand, a third fifteen hundred. At one moment the bidding went as high as three thousand francs. "And you, my poet," said Rachel, "why don't you make an offer? Come, what will you give me?" "I give you my heart," answered Alfred. "The ring is yours." With childish impetuosity Rachel threw the ring, as she spoke, into the poet's plate. After dinner Alfred wished to give it back to her. "Dear poet," she said, "you have given me your heart, and I would not return it to you for a hundred thousand crowns. Keep this ring as a pledge. If ever, by my fault or yours, you renounce the idea of writing the *rôle* for which I have expressed a wish so often, bring me the ring, and I will take it back." He accepted it subject to these conditions.

Rachel left for England shortly afterwards. She had promised to write to "her poet," but did not keep her word, and Alfred, knowing by experience the capriciousness of the great tragedian, drew unfavorable conclusions from her silence. When he saw her in the autumn, she

said nothing of a piece. Rose Chéri was at that time acting with great success in *Clarissa Harlowe.* Alfred expressed the high opinion he had of the young girl before Rachel. The latter immediately showed signs of displeasure, and treated the poet with such scant courtesy that a day or two after he returned the ring, which she seemed to have forgotten.

Four years later, in the spring of 1851, Rachel gave a dinner in the house she had had built in the Rue Trudon. Alfred de Musset was invited. When dinner was announced the mistress of the house took his arm. On the way to the dining-room they had to pass along a narrow staircase. Alfred stepped on Rachel's dress. She said, with one of her queenly airs, "When you give your arm to a lady you ought to take care where you walk."

"When people have become princesses," answered the poet, "and build a mansion, they ought to command their architect to build a wider staircase."

The beginning of the evening was unpropitious. After dinner, however, peace was made. Alfred recalled regretfully the time when he had partaken of supper with Roxane off tin plates. Rachel was amused at the recollection.

"You think, perhaps, seeing my present luxury and riches, that I am not so good-hearted as I was then. I will prove the contrary."

"How?" asked Alfred.

"By going to see you and begging you to write something for me."

True to her word, she arrived next day, and remained for an hour talking about theatrical affairs.

She came, indeed, on several succeeding days, and ended by extorting the promise of a *rôle*. Still Alfred had no faith in the genuineness of her intentions, and, as she soon after left for another tour in England, the matter remained in abeyance. Meantime, Madeleine Brohan won all hearts in *Les Caprices de Marianne*. Rachel, piqued by this success, wrote from London, begging Alfred to remember his promise. Encouraged by her persistence, he began a drama in five acts, the scene of which he laid in Venice in the fifteenth century. The fragment, — for it never was finished, — is published among his posthumous papers under the name of *Faustine*. Another misunderstanding arose, which was destined definitely to end the friendship between the great tragédienne and the great poet, a friendship which ought to have been prolific in results for the dramatic art of the day. They seemed formed to stimulate each other's powers, but, unfortunately, something antagonistic in the two natures negatived the possibilities of their genius.

"Please persuade Léon Gozlan to compose a short piece for me, Musset being dead — to literature," she writes to a friend a little later. We find him about the same time shutting up in his desk the piece he was writing for her, with these words, "*Adieu, Rachel; c'est toi que j'ensevelis pour jamais.*"

Alfred de Musset threw away his birthright in this instance, as in so many others. She may have been capricious and changeable; but there is little doubt, if he had completed a drama and brought it to her for acceptance, she, who accepted so much that was worthless, would willingly have interpreted and done justice to his work.

"Many others forced their tragedies upon her," Paul de Musset says; "but they were not poets; *il faut prendre les poètes comme ils sont.*"

Perhaps so; but does not the brother's pen refuse to write what he as well as all the world must have known by then, that the author of *Rolla* was no longer the poet but the "*poète déchu,*" as Alfred himself described him.

CHAPTER VIII.

ENGLAND.

In the month of May, 1841, Rachel accepted the proposal made by Mr. Lumley of Her Majesty's Theatre to act there for one month.

The frantic enthusiasm with which her performances had been received in Paris was cooling, and her father and the Director of the Comédie Française came to the conclusion that absence, and a triumphant return with fresh laurels gathered elsewhere, might reconquer the place in the affections of the public that she had lost. The young actress took London by storm Nothing was talked of but her fascination, her genius, her beauty. The Queen had been married but a year. Prince Albert had inspired her with the love of intellectual pleasures, amongst which he included the theatre. The representations at Her Majesty's, therefore, were honored by the presence of the Court, and crowded with all the fashionable world of London. Her first appear-

ance was in Hermione. An amusing mistake was made by the audience, to whom the actress was as yet unknown. The part of Andromaque was filled by a Mademoiselle Larcher, a very handsome person of but mediocre talent. In Racine's play, she comes on in the scene before Hermione. The English public, seeing Mademoiselle Larcher, thought it was Rachel, and greeted her with thunders of applause, which quite bewildered the poor girl, unaccustomed to any demonstration of the kind. When the real attraction of the evening appeared, aware of their error, the audience gave her a still more enthusiastic reception, which was repeated every time she acted. By the following letter, written to M. Carré a few days after her arrival, we can see the favorable impression made by the warmth with which she was welcomed: —

Here I am in London, enjoying an unprecedented success. My first appearance was in Hermione, and I can tell you that when I first came on, my knees trembled, and I felt so shaky that I think I should have fallen, if thunders of applause had not come to encourage me, and to rouse me to fuller consciousness of all it behooved me to do to merit this reception, which was mere kindness, and nothing but kindness, since they had not yet heard me. The bravoes and plaudits lasted without intermission to the end, and then I was recalled. Hats and handkerchiefs were shaken out of the boxes, and several bouquets fell at my feet. A

splendid engagement has been offered to me for the season of 1842. *Voilà, belle Emilie, à quel point nous en sommes.*

In no particular did the actress exaggerate the success she had achieved or the enthusiasm she created. Her enemies in Paris declared her triumph to be the result of *tripotage*, and, in a pamphlet published about this time, called *La Vérité Rachel*, M. Maurice the author says: —

> We will not speak of the origin of the celebrated puffs that have been sent to London. They are born in Paris, brought into the world by Papa Félix, his daughter, and M. V——. M. C—— wrote them out, corrected them and gave them to M. V——, who *paid for them*, and sent them to London to a certain M. B——, who translated them, or had them translated and inserted in the London papers.

There is little doubt that Laporte, real manager of the Opera House, — though Lumley, his agent and solicitor, appeared in all business arrangements, — used every means to make her visit a financial success. He introduced, for the first time in England, the Parisian *claque*, and endeavored to conciliate the press, and obtain favorable critical notices for the tragedian who was to make his fortune. But Rachel needed no artificial aid. She became the idol of the town. The Opera House was crowded to excess. Fashion flew into the wildest raptures. The enthusiasm of Paris in 1838 was equalled

and even surpassed. She was hailed with fanatical admiration. She became the rage.

It is now nearly half a century since Rachel first appeared among us. She died ere the young men of this generation were born, yet the echo of her words and the memory of her influence have been transmitted to them as a living presence by those who saw her. Philosophers, poets, critics, novelists, are unanimous. She was transcendent — a revelation! and this in spite of all she had to conquer and overcome, both in the company who supported her, and in the absolute want of sympathy felt by Englishmen for the French classic poets, with their recurrence of spoken rhymes and stiff monotony. "*Comme c'est grec*," said La Harpe of *Andromaque*. We say, "*Comme c'est français*." Orestes and Pyrrhus, Hermione and Andromaque, are but fine gentlemen and ladies of the time of Louis XIV. Rachel, however, was of no nationality, of no age, neither Greek nor French, classical nor modern. Her genius was for all time; she unerringly interpreted human nature in its grandest and truest forms. She took the stately Alexandrines, and made them the vehicle of her own love or hate, joy or grief. She became, as it were, the abstract expression of whatever passion she sought to portray; and by that portrayal she had the power of enchaining

the attention of her audience, to the forgetting of all accessories and surroundings.

Long afterwards men remembered with a thrill her speaking a certain sentence, or her look at a certain moment, when even the play itself was completely forgotten; such as her tender despair when, in *Les Horaces*, she utters the reproach, "*Baiser une main qui me perce le cœur!*" or her look when, in that terrible *rôle* of Roxane, she stalked silently upon the stage, approached the front, and remained gazing at the audience. A hush came over them; women involuntarily turned away from that glance; men breathed more heavily, and wished that she would break that painful silence. Subdued by the power of that fierce look, the awful reality of vengeful power which it expressed, they shivered and grew uncomfortable. Then, when the silence seemed wholly intolerable, the pent-up rage, the anger of the wronged woman, burst forth with the irresistible force of a torrent. The tall figure drawn to its utmost height, the heaving breast, the swaying arms, the pale face, the firmly compressed mouth, were so intently fierce that the actress and her artificial surroundings were forgotten, and the audience deemed it true.

On the 31st of May she wrote to M. Carré again, to say that she has been seriously

indisposed, but only stopped in bed a few days; the same feverish energy which all her life was so much greater than her strength drove her inexorably along. At the end of her letter she adds, "Wednesday — I am engaged to the Queen (Dowager) at Marlborough House. All the Court will be there; I am so frightened. The English journalists say quantities of nice things about me, and all unsolicited (*sans cartes de visites*)."

When her sister Sarah came over from Paris, she wrote: —

How glad I am I made Sarah come over! I am so sad, far from all those I love, not able even to talk of them! I am sure this separation, in a great measure, caused my illness.

I was at Windsor when Sarah arrived (the day after my evening passed at Queen Victoria's). What can I tell you of the reception the English people have given me? The papers will tell you it all better than I can. I played Marie Stuart yesterday, the 14th June. My success in this new *rôle* was complete. Two bouquets and two crowns fell at my feet amid thunders of applause. The receipts amounted to 30,000 francs and some guineas; 4,000 were taken to pay expenses, and 13,000 were sent to me next morning. I am delighted.

I have given up private recitations, my health obliges me to; dining out only is permitted. I received a beautiful bracelet from Sa Majesté la Reine (Regent) (*sic*), and I supped at Windsor after a most gracious and flattering reception by Her Majesty. She was unable to honor my benefit by her presence; she expressed her regret to

me. I send a rough copy of the letter I wrote her the day after the evening I spent there. My father will be in Paris on the 19th, and will give you some papers to read.

Your friend,

RACHEL.

Lord William Lennox, in his *Recollections*, describes the reception given by the young Queen to Rachel, to whom the Duchess of Kent presented her:—

One of the greatest dramatic triumphs I ever witnessed was achieved by Mademoiselle Rachel. Upon one occasion, when I had the honor of receiving a command to dine at Windsor Castle, during the lifetime of the Prince Consort, she was engaged to go through the principal scenes from *Marie Stuart*, *Oreste*, and *Les Horaces*, supported by two or three of the French Company then acting in London. There were no "accessories," no stage, no scenery, no costumes. The performance took place in an alcove in the large drawing-room, where nothing could have riveted the attention of the audience but the consummate skill of the artiste, who so thoroughly identified herself with the respective characters, that all minor details were driven out of the minds of her attentive listeners. At the conclusion Her Majesty warmly complimented Rachel on her exquisite performance. In the course of the evening I had the pleasure of being introduced to this great artiste, and conducted her to the refreshment room. That and a formal visit I paid her in London were the only opportunities I had of conversing with her. During these brief interviews, I found her most amiable, and *spirituelle* to the greatest degree.

It was after this wonderful evening that the Queen, as a testimony of her admiration and goodwill, presented Rachel with a bracelet, composed of two wreathed serpents with diamond heads; while graven on the inside was the simple inscription, "À Rachel, Victoria Reine."

Dr. Véron, the "Bourgeois de Paris," in his amusing *Reminiscences of Rachel*, from which we have already given extracts, tells a story that shows us the curious contrasts of Rachel's nature, and lets us see what a Bohemian she remained, in spite of the adulation and splendor amid which she now moved. On her return from Windsor, the day after the evening described above, she entered the sitting-room of the lodging where she and her family lived, and, throwing herself into an arm-chair, said, with a sigh, "*Ah, je suis fatiguée. J'ai besoin de m'encanailler.*"

On another occasion during her visit to England, he tells us, "she quarrelled with me. I contradicted her; I heard her utter the word '*canaille*.' We were reconciled; I complained. 'You complain, do you?" she said, laughing; 'why it is from this moment only that you belong to the family.'" And yet, he adds a little further on, in a tone of tender regret, had I written these *Reminiscences* in 1838, I would have had the greatest difficulty in restraining,

even before the public, the frantic admiration I felt for the young Rachel; but I have become old, she has become rich, and nothing moderates mind and heart more than riches and years."

Frances Anne Kemble, in her *Records of Later Life*, alludes to Véron's *Reminiscences*. After speaking of Grisi, she goes on: —

> In a woman of far other and higher endowments, that wonderful actress Rachel, whose face and figure, under the transforming influence of her consummate dramatic art, were the perfect interpreters of her perfect dramatic conception, an ignoble, low-lived expression occasionally startled and disturbed one, on a countenance as much more noble and intellectual as it was less beautiful than Grisi's, — the outward and visible sign of the inward and visible disgrace, which made it possible for one of her literary countrymen, and warmest admirers, to say that she was adorable because she was so "*délicieusement canaille*," — Emilie, Camille, Esther, Pauline, — such a "delightful blackguard!"

The outward and visible sign of her disgrace had not, however, yet dimmed Rachel's genius, and in all the great houses in London she was received as a favored guest. When she seemed to suffer from cold on the occasion of her visit to Windsor, the Duchess of Kent took off the magnificent yellow Indian shawl she wore and wrapped it round her (a present which, by the way, was despatched to "Maman Félix," to Paris next day). The Queen threw her roses

out of her own bouquet on to the stage; her every movement was chronicled. She was slightly indisposed, and frequent bulletins were issued, informing the public of the state of her health. On reappearing, she was welcomed as if she had been snatched from the jaws of death.

When she took farewell of her enthusiastic admirers on the 20th July, nothing could exceed the excitement. According to one writer, "her triumph had even extended to the heart of the manager, who was said to have offered her his hand!" This statement, however, sounds rather like one of M. Laporte's many modes of puffing.

From Frances Kemble's *Records of Later Life* we take the following account: —

I shall never forget the first time I ever heard Mademoiselle Rachel speak. I was acting my old part of Julia in *The Hunchback*, at Lady Ellesmere's, where the play was got up for an audience of her friends, and for her especial gratification. The room was darkened, with the exception of our stage, and I had no means of discriminating anybody among my audience, which was, as became an assembly of such distinguished persons, decorously quiet and undemonstrative. But in one of the scenes, where the foolish heroine, in the midst of her vulgar triumph at the Earl of Rochdale's proposals, is suddenly overcome by the remorseful recollection of her love for Clifford, and almost lets the Earl's letter fall from her trembling hands, I heard a voice out of the darkness, and it appeared to me almost close to my feet, exclaiming in

a tone, the vibrating depth of which I shall never forget, "*Ah, bien, bien, très bien!*" Mademoiselle Rachel's face is very expressive and dramatically fine, though not absolutely beautiful. It is a long oval, with a head of classical and very graceful contour, the forehead rather narrow, and not very high; the eyes small, dark, deep-set, and terribly powerful; the brow straight, noble, and fine in form, though not very flexible.

I was immensely struck and carried away with her performance of Hermione, though I am not sure that some of the parts did not seem to me finer than the whole as a conception. That in which she is unrivaled by any actor or actress I ever saw, is the expression of a certain combined and concentrated hatred and scorn. Her reply to Andromaque's appeal to her, in that play, was one of the most perfect things I have ever seen on the stage. The cold, cruel, acrid enjoyment of her rival's humiliation, the quiet, bitter, unmerciful exercise of the power of torture, was certainly, in its keen incisiveness, quite incomparable. It is singular that so young a woman should so especially excel in delineations and expressions of this order of emotion, while, in the utterance of tenderness, whether in love or sorrow, she appears comparatively less successful. I am not, however, perhaps, competent to pronounce upon this point, for Hermione and Émilie, in Corneille's *Cinna*, are not characters abounding in tenderness. Lady M—— saw her the other day in *Marie Stuart*, and cried her eyes almost out, so she must have some pathetic power. —— was so enchanted with her, both on and off the stage, that he took me to call upon her on her arrival in London, and I was very much pleased with the quiet grace and dignity, the excellent *bon ton* of her manners and deportment. The other morning, too, at Stafford House, I was extremely overcome at my sister's first

public exhibition in England, and was endeavoring, while I screened myself behind a pillar, to hide my emotion and talk with composure to Rachel; she saw, however, how it was with me, and with great kindness allowed me to go into a room that had been appropriated to her use between the declamations, and was very amiable and courteous to me.

From her second expedition to London, in 1842, Mademoiselle Rachel brought back a trophy which she prized even more than the Queen's bracelet of the year before. It was a letter from the Duke of Wellington, which we must give in the original French; the grammar outrivals Rachel's own.

Le Maréchal Duc de Wellington présente ses hommages à Mademoiselle Rachel: il a fait prévenir au théâtre, qu'il desirait y retenir sa loge *enfin* de pouvoir y assister à la représentation pour le *benefice* de Mademoiselle Rachel.

Il y assistera certainement *si il* lui devient possible de s'absenter ce jour là de l'assemblie du parlement dont il est membre.

Il regrettera beaucoup, *si il* se trouve impossible ainsi d'avoir la satisfaction de la voir et l'entendre, encore une fois avant son départ de Lôndres.

She received several visits from the illustrious veteran, and a story went the rounds of fashionable society that once, in conversation with him, Rachel complained of her nerves, upon which he recommended her to employ some baths of

eau sale. On Rachel inquiring what degree of *saleté* would be necessary, the Duke condescended to an explanation, and Rachel then discovered that he meant "salt," not "dirty" water.

We must ask the reader to forgive these numerous quotations. Alas! all we know of Rachel can only be an echo transmitted to us from those who had the privilege of hearing and seeing her. In every stroke of the brush, in every line written, the painter and the poet leave us the inheritance of their genius and inspiration. The actor's frown or smile is as transitory as its effect on the audience whom it thrills.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FÉLIX FAMILY.

It is now time for us to speak of Rachel's family, that "Félix tribe," of whom such hard things were said and believed. Strict Jews, professing the religion and adhering to the traditions of their race, they inherited some of its weaknesses. Open-handed and generous to one another, they were rapacious and greedy in their dealings with the public. Attached by the strongest ties of affection and clanship, the family peace was sometimes disturbed by dissensions, which hardly entitled them, as their enemies said, to the name of "Felix." Rachel's father was a man of superior intellect and education for his station in life. He showed good sense and judgment in many difficult transactions in which he was called upon to act for his daughter. Rapacious as the public declared him to be, he had a certain sense of justice in his money dealings. He might extort the pound of flesh, but, Shylock-like, "only for use of that which was his own." Calm, slow, and methodical in the ordinary

conduct of life, he was sometimes seized with fits of ungovernable rage, during which his family fled in terror, not daring to contradict or withstand him. We have read Védel's description of his behavior when he declared his daughter should not act *Bajazet.*

Fortunately, these occurrences were rare. The same sense of justice that influenced him in his money affairs influenced him in his treatment of his children. Proud as he was of his marvellous daughter, he never allowed himself to bestow undeserving or exaggerated praise. He had a natural instinct on the subject of dramatic art, and often gave Rachel advice, of which she was not slow to see the wisdom, and by which, in many instances, she profited largely. He was frequently present at the lessons she took from Samson, and the following amusing account of his interference, quoted from one of the Parisian papers of the time, is given by Madame de B—— (?) : —

The word "*Toujours*" is to be spoken in Mademoiselle Rachel's *rôle.* M. Samson advises his pupil to utter it with head erect, loud voice, and firm, resolute tone.

"Thus, raising your head, say, '*Toujours.*'"

M. Félix, who is present, interposes.

"No, that 's not the way ; you must say it mildly, with great feeling; thus, casting your eyes to heaven, '*Toujours.*'"

M. Samson (annoyed). — "It must be said authoritatively."

M. Félix (getting obstinate). — "It must be spoken tenderly, pathetically."

M. Samson (waxing testy). — "I am her teacher, and must not be interfered with."

M. Félix (furious). — "I am her father, and must be obeyed."

Mademoiselle Rachel, quite bewildered, says the fatal word "*toujours*," no matter how. M. Samson thinks he discovers the intonation suggested by father Félix, and becomes indignant.

"You are an ungrateful pupil. You are indebted to me for success, and this is how you behave. I've done with you; adieu!"

Mademoiselle Rachel, dismayed at having offended her professor, without whose assistance she can do nothing, says "*toujours*" as he wishes. There is no mistaking her this time, and father Félix, in his turn, flies into a passion.

"You unnatural child! you rebellious daughter!"

Mademoiselle Rachel bursts into tears, and the lesson ends here, for the pupil's sobs prevent her saying "*toujours*" in any way.

Samson and Félix never agreed. The first open rupture occurred when, the autumn following Rachel's first appearance at the Français, her father demanded what the management considered extortionate terms. It was half what they gave her later, and the whole of that winter the average receipts, every time the young actress played, were 6,000 francs. The Comédie,

however, including Samson, were highly indignant, and the story goes that, when Rachel went to take her usual lesson of the old professor, he asked if it were true that she and her father had made the demands stated. She answered in the affirmative, and added that, according to the "Code Civil," she, being a minor, was legally entitled to cancel her engagement and ask for better terms.

"You need no further lessons of me, then," replied the choleric old man. "I teach declamation, not chicanery, and I am not in the habit of associating with those who shape their course by the guidance of the 'Code Civil.' Your talent," he added, dashing to the ground a little statuette of Rachel, "will be destroyed and shattered like that. Go! I never want to see you again."

Abraham Félix, who had waited down below to escort his daughter home, was highly indignant when he heard the account of the interview. The breach between the two was never healed, and we read that, so far was the resentment carried, that, a few days before Rachel's funeral, M. Empis, manager of the Comedie Française, received a letter from M. Félix, in which he expressed a hope that some one would speak in the name of the Comédie Française over his daughter's grave; at the same time stating his distinct wish that it should not be Monsieur Samson.

The *sociétaires* resented this insult to their comrade, and no one would take the place of him whom they knew Rachel had loved so well in spite of the differences that now and then occurred between them.

"Maman Félix," as Rachel always called her mother, was a true daughter of Israel in her stern and unbending virtue, and in her submission to her irascible and rapacious husband. She bore him many children, and spent many years of her life striving to earn enough to keep the wolf from the door. Rachel ever cherished the deepest affection and respect for her mother. Reverence for parents is one of the traditions of the Jewish race, and in the Félix family it was carried to an almost extreme extent. Even in the full tide of her popularity and fame the great actress remained equally submissive and humble to her parents. Mademoiselle Avenel, one of the "company" who went with Rachel to Germany, recounts an incident that occurred in Berlin. Rachel, wishing to present some souvenir of her gratitude to the Princess Charlotte of Prussia, concluded that the present most likely to gratify her was a copy of Émile Angier's *Diane*, a unique copy presented to Rachel by the author, and containing on the fly-leaf some complimentary verses addressed to herself. A note had to be written to accompany this offering,

and to assist in inditing this, Mademoiselle Avenel was called into council. While thus engaged, Rachel requested her mother to ring the bell for the servant. The old lady rose to do so, but not as quickly as her impatient daughter thought necessary, and she reiterated rather peremptorily, "*Mais sonnez donc, ma mère*" The old lady stopped short, and altering her course towards the door, left the room, saying with the offended dignity of a duchess, "*Sonnez vous-même, ma fille.*" Rachel made no reply, but, when the note was despatched, hastened to her mother's room to apologize, and entreat forgiveness for her imperious behavior.

Rachel's letters to her family are all charming, but those to her mother are more especially so.

"*On ne remercie pas une mère des ennuis, des fatigues qu'on lui cause; on l'aime, et jamais on ne s'acquitte envers elle et voilà!*" she wrote a few months before her death.

In her relations with her family, Rachel shows at her best. She might be selfish, heartless, grasping to others, but to them she showed all her affection, kindness, and generosity. Both father and mother died some years after her; and both left considerable fortunes, which had been bestowed upon them by their daughter. In 1841 she gave them a luxuriously furnished apartment, and took a country house for them

in the Vallée de Montmorency, where they lived the greater part of the year. Her great delight was to retire there for a time, surrounded by father, mother, brother, and sisters. Jules Janin relates how, —

One summer evening, the actress, in all the brilliancy of her youth and beauty, was seated in her garden contemplating the scene with delight. Applauded, admired, worshipped, she was the pride and joy of Paris. The evening before, M. de Châteaubriand had conducted her on his arm to the theatre; that morning her carriage had been stopped by a crowd of all that was noble and distinguished in Paris, that they might inquire after her health. On her table lay a letter from Victor Hugo, rendering homage to the young muse who had for the moment dethroned him and his romantic following. There she was, at twenty-five, in the zenith of her power and popularity. Up above sang the nightingales. A little way off her brothers and sisters played and laughed, while close by sat her father and mother. Her happiness was complete.

Suddenly, one of the company present [evidently Janin himself] turned to the young girl and said, "What have you done with your red velvet bonnet of the month of July, 1838?" Rachel, waking out of the dreamland where she had been wandering, smiled and answered, "What a memory you have! I should think I did remember my red bonnet. Maman made it," and she smiled across at her mother; "it was intended to be a summer and winter bonnet — the velvet for winter, the yellow rose in front for summer. I can recall the making of that bonnet so well, the satisfaction of my mother, the pride of my father, the astonishment of my younger sisters. I wore it during

the first six months of my *début*. I used to put it on for rehearsal in the morning, put it on to go to my work in the evening, and naturally I put it on when sometimes my mother took me to the play. On one occasion Mademoiselle Mars was acting (I had appeared in Hermione the evening before, and the receipts had amounted to 700 francs), and I was given a free ticket for the gallery. Imagine my delight. I presented myself with my red bonnet. Despair! they stopped me as I was going in. 'Where are you going dressed like that?' cried out one of the men at the box-office; and all I could succeed in obtaining was a place among the gods against a column. And I now remember," she added, with a serious look, "that an old gendeman, seeing how rudely I had been treated, stopped me as I was ascending the stairs to the third gallery. 'Ah! Mademoiselle,' he said, with a sweeping bow, 'there are people who ought to regret one day their want of respect for your bonnet; and I know some, beginning with an old fellow like myself, who would proudly carry your yellow rose in their button-hole.' He spoke, bowed, and disappeared; and mamma and I and the yellow rose ascended to the top."

Receiving, morning and evening, as she was at this time, more flowers than she could take away, and possessing more jewels and gowns than she could wear, she could afford to joke about the red velvet bonnet with the yellow rose, strong in that philosophy taught by sudden changes of fortune. She would turn from the adulation and luxury of her years of success, and seek repose in intimate familiarity with her family and friends, loving to recall the thoughtless

days and poetic hopes of her youth and poverty. She wrote on the 7th June, 1844, to her mother: —

My dear Mother, — Although my last letter was from Raphael and Rebecca, I answer to you to let you know how well I am. Although I have had a very fatiguing week, I do not feel in the least the worse for it. Catherine twice, and Horace for Corneille's anniversary, have been the parts I have acted. Thank goodness, my work is over. The theatre is satisfied with my devotion, the public has expressed its opinion by continued applause, and I am content and happy. After work comes play; I have arranged, therefore, a picnic, out-of-doors in the woods, such as we used to have several years ago, in less happy times, and I invite you to come. I will lay the table, fry the potatoes, and wait at table. You shall make the soup.

Her sister Sarah was Rachel's principal correspondent; and many of the letters quoted in M. Heylli's book, even when not bearing her name, are evidently addressed to her. Though not bound to Sarah by the ties of almost maternal affection she felt for Rebecca, Rachel was deeply and sincerely attached to her. Whenever she was ill, Sarah was the one sent for to nurse her back to health again. Whenever she was in any difficulty, or wanted any business done, it was into Sarah's sympathetic ear that she poured all her troubles and difficulties. Sarah's unsensitive and rather vulgar nature was a good

conductor to receive the electricity and fire of her passionate sister, and many a storm thus diverted passed off harmlessly, not without hard words on both sides; for Sarah, undaunted by the proud reserve that made Rachel respected and feared in her family, often told her wholesome truths; but every fight ended with kisses and tears.

Being more nearly of an age, the greater part of their youth was passed together. Rachel's first representations for money, singing comic songs in the Parisian streets, had been given with her. Sarah remembered some of them, and would rehearse them later with great effect to a limited audience.

It was to the elder sister Rachel wrote when, after acting for three months at the Théâtre Français, she found she had aroused the ill-will of her comrades, begging her to return and give her courage, not to face the spectators, who were kindness itself, but to face the ladies and gentlemen of the theatre, who treated her "like a wild beast."

It is to her ear alone she confided if she were wounded in her professional pride, if a new *rôle* had been a failure, or a tour in the provinces or abroad had not been so successful as anticipated. It is to her she is found confiding the passions, numerous and violent, which she

inspired, sometimes in the outside public, sometimes in members of her own company:—

My dear Sarah.—No doubt you will be astonished to see my handwriting so often; but, *ma foi*, the letter that I have this moment received from X—— seems so surprising that I send it to you, as a masterpiece of the passion with which I inspired him. Mercifully, my real Michonnet[1] (the theatre) is there to console me in case I utterly despair.

Then, when the end came, and, as a last resource, she was ordered to La Cannet in the autumn of 1857, it was Sarah who accompanied her, and who never left her bedside until her eyes were closed in death. Through good report and evil report, these two, in spite of violent quarrels and many separations, remained loyal to one another.

Sarah, of all the sisters, had the least dramatic gift. Although not without intelligence, she had no refinement or perception of the delicate shades of difference in expressing emotion. Rachel was much blamed for using her influence to obtain Sarah's admission into the Comédie Française, where she appeared for the first time on the 24th May, 1849, as Célimène, in the *Misanthrope*. The Parisian public shrugged their

[1] Michonnet is the faithful friend who counsels and helps Adrienne Lecouvreur, in the drama of that name.

shoulders and said, "Going to the Théâtre Français was like going to the synagogue." Rachel's influence was not strong enough to stem the condemnation universally bestowed upon Sarah by the critics; and she was obliged to accept an engagement at the Odeon, where, in November, 1851, she created the *rôle* of Caroline de Lussan in the *Droits de l'homme*, by Premaray. This was the only piece in which Sarah ever was successful. The Théâtre Français, in consequence, re-engaged her; but her stay was limited, and she soon made up her mind to definitely quit the theatre. She found a more lucrative pursuit in the manufacture of toilet washes, and made a fortune by the sale of her celebrated "*eau des fées*," which bears her name, and is still extensively patronized. She died at Paris, on the 12th January, 1877.

Rachel's other sisters all enjoyed a considerable reputation on the stage. Rebecca, indeed, who was nine years younger than Rachel, was at one time looked upon as a most promising recruit in the ranks of the Comédie Française. Rachel devoted herself to the cultivation of her younger sister's talent; she smoothed the difficulties of her profession for her as much as she could, and from Rebecca's earliest years took her under her protection. One of the first letters in the series published by M. Heylli is a charming

one from Rachel to her mother on the subject of the little sister: —

DEAR MOTHER. Alas! poor Rebecca fell and tore her dress. She was inconsolable, and I understood the depths of her misery. I comforted her by telling her I would intercede in her favor, and that, to make forgiveness more sure, I would present her with my silk dress. She smiled; she is saved. Good-by.

In 1842, during her triumphant visit to England, she sent Rebecca a most homely present, but one proving that in the midst of her brilliant triumphs she had a tender thought for those she loved at home.

LONDON, 25th July, 1842.

I send you, by the messenger, a dozen pairs of English stockings; I have marked them with my own white hand. As to the petticoats, they are better, they tell me, in Saxony; I will send you some from Dresden. I hope you and the family are well; we are enjoying robust health. These are the news of the day.

A thousand kisses.

Rachel made the child work under her own superintendence when preparing for her approaching appearance in public, urging her to study both classic and romantic *rôles;* amongst other things, teaching her to spell — this great tragedian who spelt so badly herself!

MARSEILLES, 26th June, 1843.

MY DEAR LITTLE DUKE OF YORK. — Learn your part properly or take care! On my return, if you do not

repeat it correctly, I will be a Gloucester or a Tyrrel for you; but if the Duke of York is good, I will be his brother Edward, with something in my pocket for him.

I am pleased with your writing, it is like mine—when I take pains, of course.

I hope, dear Duke, that you have not two hearts; that would be very wrong. The y that I find at the end of a word, written by your own little pen, made me for a moment afraid of this. Reassure me on this point, for I prefer one good heart to two passable ones.

I embrace your Royal Highness on both cheeks, with the respect due to you, dear Duke.

On the 14th November, 1843, when only fourteen years of age, Rebecca appeared at the Odéon, in the *rôle* of Chimene in the *Cid*, in which her brother Raphael, aged eighteen, played with her (also his first appearance), in the character of Rodrigue. Rachel afterwards obtained her an engagement at the Français, where, on the 1st July, 1845, she appeared in the *rôle* of Palmyre in *Mahomet*. Rachel made her act with her in her classic parts first, and then, a little later, she took her as partner in *Angelo*, where the young girl appeared at her best. She was blond and rather below the middle height; without being pretty, she had a pleasing expression, and her voice was agreeable, although wanting in power. She formed a good contrast to her "great sister."

The following is a letter Rachel wrote to her,

when absent, preparing her for a performance of *Bajazet*, in which they were to act together:

My dear little Friend and Sister. — I must say you do fulfil your duty of Love; I am very much touched by your attention, because I love you so much; I am delighted at your progress, and hope (wait, I am coming!) that when I return we will march forward with gigantic strides, and that we will surpass all past and future *débutantes*. I am bringing a very pretty "*canezou*" from Nancy for my little comrade, and two pairs of warm cuffs.

Be sure you are ready for your *rôle* in *Athalie*. I intend shortly to act *Bajazet*; we will study it together, and it is in that I like to think of the progress you have made. You have plenty of intelligence, my child, but you want confidence in yourself. Come, my comrade, be courageous and hopeful! the future will justify all my predictions.

The future! Alas, poor Rachel! could she but have torn aside the veil that hid it from her sight, she would have seen Rebecca dying by inches of that cruel disease that carried her off also in turn. A fortnight after the above letter to her little sister from Marseilles, she had written to her father, as we have seen, complaining of the aching pain between the shoulders, that never left her, sure precursor and sign of consumption. Both were already doomed: the career of the one was cut off in the full plenitude of her power and genius; the other only appeared before the public a pale and graceful phantom, pathetic

and touching in her youth and tenderness, beside the grandeur and strength of her sister, and then vanished, taking with her all the joy and gladness and the best and purest affection Rachel ever knew.

We have already alluded to her brother Raphael. She seems to have been attached to him and to have depended on his good sense for the management of her affairs; but she knew his faults, and often had a sly hit at him.

In the letter addressed to M. Jules Lecomte, she makes fun of the company Raphael had got together to accompany her in 1849, during her tour in the south of France:—

I remember having read in an article of yours this observation, full of rare and deep wisdom, "*Les voyages qui forment la jeunesse déforment les cartons à chapeaux.*" Never has the truth of this maxim been more brought home to me than since I left Paris. I lost a trunk at Moulins. I saw the box in which my old Rose had packed the "*peplum*" of the *Moineau de Lesbie* fly from the top of an imperial to the ground with a rapidity which ought to excite the emulation of the company got together by Raphaël!

From Liège, however, in June, 1847, she wrote to Sarah in enthusiastic terms:—

I have not written to you before, because I can only speak of one subject, and that is so sad a one that I am afraid of taking up my pen. But so as not to fail utterly (for I owe myself rather to others than to myself), I will

summon all my courage, and only speak of my success in Holland. But I suddenly remember: I gave all details to my mother; it is useless, therefore, to repeat them. I will tell you then of Raphael, of this dear boy, who seems to have been sent to comfort me for all my sorrow. I cannot tell you the good his presence has done me, or how much his devotion touches me. He sees my troubles, and when he does not see them he guesses them. And it is wonderful what he does to prevent me dwelling on them. It is not a youth who is by me, but a man with heart and intelligence. His character is gentle, pliable, and amiable; his behavior excellent; indeed, his disposition is perfect. He leaves me very seldom, and only goes for a walk sometimes when I am in a bad temper. It would be impossible to forward our interests with more practical good sense. How, indeed, express it? He is my father, my child, my friend, and my protector. The only thing is, he is impressed with the belief that every one is trying to cheat me; the consequence is he is like a cat watching a mouse.

Rachel always indulged in extremes of praise or blame. At one time Raphael was an angel of goodness, at another she would roundly accuse him of being parsimonious, and not arranging things properly for her. It is only fair to say, however, that during the disastrous tour in America, which was entirely organized and carried out by Raphael, we never in one of her letters home read a word of blame; although it was his want of management and foresight that, in a great measure, caused the shipwreck of the whole expedition.

CHAPTER X.

RACHEL AND SAMSON.

We have already several times had occasion to mention the name of Samson, teacher of elocution and professor at the Conservatoire, under whose supervision and guidance the young actress studied all her great parts. As actor and author Samson was a man of considerable talent; as teacher he was a man of genius. Madame Plessis, Allan, Favart, Madeleine and Augustine Bohan, Rose Chéri, Jouassin, Stella Colás, Émilie Dubois, Aimée Desclée, were trained by him.

He had actively served the drama in France for thirty years. He had lived through some of its greatest periods — had been taught by Fleury and Baptiste Aimé, had acted with Mademoiselle Mars and Madame Dorval in their prime, and, above all, had had the inexpressible advantage of hearing Talma's dicta and lessons on the "Actor's Art" pronounced by the lips of the great tragedian himself. In his delightful *Mémoires* he gives an account of Talma's lectures delivered at the Conservatoire. He tells us:

The only quality of the professor that Talma lacked was exactitude. Absent-minded and easy-going, he forgot the lesson hour. When his pupils went to his house, they often found him with people to whom he had given a *rendezvous* which he had forgotten, and the class was adjourned, or he would chat with his pupils until some appointment took him elsewhere and he was obliged to hurry away. But when he did give his lessons, what delightful and profitable hours for his young audience! I see and hear him now. Destitute of all means of illusion, without theatrical costume, a chair between his legs, and an opera-glass in his hand, he was as tragic as on the stage, and made us shudder as he declaimed the verses of *Andromaque* or *Phèdre*. In Phèdre's declaration of love to Hippolytus, I hear him uttering these passion fraught words, "*Mais fidèle, mais fier, et même un peu farouche.*" The way also in which he said, "*Cette noble pudeur colorait son visage,*" made the full meaning of the lines, and invested them with inimitable grace. "No straining for effect; let no effort be apparent," he said to a Phèdre in his class, who did not seem to understand him. "Remember that Phèdre, consumed by her passion, has passed three days without food and three nights without sleep. Does not Œnone say to her,

> '*Les ombres par trois fois ont obscurci les cieux,*
> *Depuis que le sommeil est entré dans vos yeux,*
> *Et le jour a trois fois chassé la nuit obscure,*
> *Depuis que votre corps languit sans nourriture*'?

Phèdre lives on the fire that burns her and the dream that pursues her; she does not inhabit the earth; she is in the clouds." And the great master's voice was deep and low, and his eyes had a far-off look, as he repeated the words of Theseus' wife. I remember the impression,

also, he made on us when he taught the last scene of the first act of *Polyeucte*. Near his hesitates, paralyzed by a feeling of terror, which he endeavors to communicate to his friend, when going to overthrow the idols in the temple. "*Mais dans le Temple enfin la mort est assurée!*" Polyeucte answers, "*Mais dans le ciel déjà le palais est préparé.*" Talma seemed to see the sign of martyrdom: he raised his eyes and hands to Heaven, and there was in the sound of his voice something so pathetic and resigned that our young hearts beat with excitement, and a trembling awe crept over us.

What memories, what traditions of priceless value these were to transmit to the young actress! and what pride Samson took in the manner in which she profited by them! We have already given the old master's account of Rachel's lessons at the Conservatoire and first appearance at the Comédie Française. We will now give his account of her when her success was assured, and when the small, insignificant child, whose promise he had been one of the first to see, was delighting thousands every evening by the magic of her genius: —

Ah, the delightful evenings! I will never forget them, nor those mornings consecrated to the dramatic education of my marvellous pupil. I count them among the happiest hours of my life. . . . What quickness of perception, what precision of understanding! Remember that this child knew nothing — that I had to explain the character of the person she was about to represent, and to give her a short historical lecture, as it were, before the lesson in

declamation began; but, once she had grasped the subject, she entered at once into the spirit of the *rôle*. Nothing was slurred over, nothing was left unstudied. We took note together of every line, of every point to be made. . . . Rachel was above the medium height. Her forehead was prominent and low; her eyes deep-set and, although not large, very expressive; her nose was almost straight; her mouth, furnished with small white, straight teeth, had an expression at once proud and sarcastic. Her head was small and perfectly set on her graceful neck. Her thinness was excessive; but she dressed with extreme art to hide it, and made it almost a beauty. Her walk and gestures were easy, all her movements undulating, her whole appearance, in fact, eminently distinguished. She had, to use a hackneyed expression, the hands and feet of a duchess. Her voice — a contralto — was limited in compass; but, thanks to her extreme correctness of ear, she used it with great skill, and the finest and most delicate inflections. It was often hoarse when she began to speak; but that soon wore off. When she first appeared on the stage her figure was not fully developed, her small features and close-set eyes salient enough, and the public pronounced her ugly. Later they pronounced her beautiful. The fact is, she was neither one nor the other, but both, according to the hour, the day, the expression that was dominant.

How can I give an idea of this admirable talent to those who have not heard her? I, who taught her the secret of her art for so many years, am forced to confess that all my efforts to describe her are futile. Dramatic art leaves nothing as a heritage to succeeding generations. The talent of the actor descends to the grave with him, and the memories he bequeaths to his admirers — memories always inadequate — fade away by

degrees, and die even with the generation that loved and applauded him. But is it right that eternal oblivion should be the lot of those who have been the delight of their age and country? Ought we not to talk of them, and try as far as we can to keep their memory alive in the hearts of the generation that revelled in their genius, and the generation that only knows them by hearsay?

Jules Janin endeavors repeatedly, in his life of Rachel, to deprive Samson of all the honor and credit of having trained and cultivated her undeveloped talent. He asserts that "Mademoiselle Rachel put aside his axioms in the higher branches of her art the first time she trod the boards of a stage worthy of her powers. . . . She was uninfluenced by any master, and had only seen an Academician on Sunday, when she paid her money to cross the *Pont des Arts*. . . . On entering the Comédie Française, the first thing she did was to forget the lessons of her last teacher, Samson, remembering only the explanations of detail he had given her."

The voluble and often inaccurate critic evidently forgets the account he gave of Rachel himself, when he first saw her at the Gymnase in May, 1837, and the account he gave of her when he saw her more than a year later, on the 18th of August, 1838, in the *rôle* of Camille. On the first occasion he says:—

This child is not a phenomenon. She never will be a prodigy; but she acts with heart and intelligence, and

without skill of any kind. Her voice is hoarse and rough, like a child's voice. Her hands are red, like a child's hands. Her foot is like her hand, unformed: she is not pretty, but she pleases. There is considerable promise in this young actress, and at present she succeeds in exciting tears, interest, and emotion.

Of her appearance at the Français a year later he thus writes:—

The feelings of that evening can only be described as a great astonishment. Without doubt we looked on a great tragic figure; but was that figure real, or was it a phantom conjured up by our own brains? At the same time, one thing was certain amid the profound silence that reigned — the young actress held enchained the rapt attention of her audience. If she was not yet the despotic sovereign she became later, she was already the *skilful* actress, who guessed by the disposition and attention of her audience how to sway and move it. Above all, the public will not allow hesitation, want of exactitude; they insist upon a genius whose education is finished. When they saw the actress perfectly at her ease, conveying naturally, calmly, and with dignity, the impression she desired, the most stiff-necked and rebellious enemies of classic art felt themselves taken possession of — above all, after the great scene of imprecation, begun in a low voice like distant thunder. Ah! it was splendidly and gloriously felt and expressed. From the orchestra, almost empty, a voice was heard, saying, "That is Tragedy!"

Janin seems to forget that the year that elapsed between the time he had first seen her in the *Vendéenne*, when she had acted "without skill of any kind," her voice hoarse and rough,

a certain amount of promise in her, but no prospect of her ever being a prodigy, and the time when he saw her in Camille, already the skilful actress, perfectly at her ease, swaying her audience as she pleased, was passed under the tutelage of Samson.

The old professor appreciated her genius thoroughly, and knew what she could do and what she could not do, better even than she herself. From the time she first appeared at the Théâtre Français until the year in which she definitely retired, Rachel never undertook a new *rôle* or revived an old one, that she did not have recourse to the help of her master; but to say that she was but the echo of her inspiration, "a perfect instrument that only answered to his touch," is as unjust as to say "that the first thing she did on entering the Comédie Française was to forget all the lessons Samson had given her, remembering only his historical explanations." The best answer, indeed, to the first statement is that although Samson trained and taught many others, he only produced one Rachel; the best answer to the second statement is Rachel's own letters, some of which we will give presently, showing how she depended on his help and advice. A few years after Rachel's death, Samson published a pamphlet, refuting Janin's statements with regard to him

and his pupil, contradicting at the same time the account the critic gave of what he was pleased to call his "discovery of Rachel." The indignant professor demands:—

You discovered Rachel? When, Sir? When she first appeared at the Gymnase? But I beg to say that long before she had been *discovered* by M. Saint Aulaire, who made her act in his little theatre in the Rue Saint Martin; the public of that part of Paris had *discovered* her, since they applauded and crowded to see her. And shortly after she was discovered by the professors of the Conservatoire, who fully recognized her powers. My opinion, written in the register of that school, is thus expressed: 'Delicate and insignificant appearance, but an admirable dramatic gift." M. Poirson, manager of the Gymnase, *discovered* and engaged her, and you had the honor in turn of *discovering* her in the *Vendeens*; but, believe me, you were not the only person who appreciated her talent. My wife, who was present at her first appearance, said to me, "There is great promise in that child; but the stage of the Gymnase is too narrow for her." M. Poirson himself soon saw this, and recognized that she was more suited to the Théâtre Français. It was then she sought my help. I became her teacher, and let Vedel, then manager of the theatre, hear her; he, seeing the child's rare gifts, engaged her, and left it to me to decide when she was to appear. Six months later the company of the Français heard her recite, and pronounced her a talent of the first order; for her success, so to speak, was a theatrical one, her colleagues and the *habitués* of the stage being almost the only spectators. Christopher Columbus had his predecessors, therefore, you see, Sir.

I have more than two hundred letters written by Mademoiselle Rachel to my wife, to my daughters, and to me. I will give you some extracts from them, by which you will perceive that, far from expressing regret at having accepted me as guide at the beginning of her dramatic career, she ever showed, during the course of that brilliant career, a confidence in me, of which I am justly proud. I beg also to inform you that there were not two of her classical or modern roles, on the subject of which this eminent artist did not consult my "experience," if not my knowledge. And I think I do no injustice to her memory by showing that her triumphs had in no way destroyed that humility which is the best appanage of talent. On January 1, 1844, she writes to me: —

DEAR M. SAMSON, — I cannot let the first day of the year go by without telling you my regret, my sorrow at our long and miserable separation, or without telling you all the affection there is in my heart for you, all the respect for Madame Samson, and all the friendship for your daughters.

Believe me, my sentiments for you are the same as ever, and will never change. Besides, do I not always need your good counsels, which have given me the strength to appear on the stage, and which have assured the applause of the public?

Again, later in the same year: —

MY DEAR GOOD MASTER, — I have not had the smallest word from you. You must sit down to your *bureau* at once, take a large sheet of paper, a good pen (if it is possible), and begin thus —— how, though, I will not tell you. Try yourself; so long as it is very tender and very kind. A long letter, do you hear? A long

letter, Roxane commands: you must obey. Don't complain of this imperious tone: it is you who taught it me.

Again: —

DEAR MONSIEUR SAMSON, — *Virginius* is announced for next Tuesday, and although I know how fatigued you are with your lessons, I venture to ask for a few hours between now and then, to make me repeat my *rôle*: for a first performance, a part to create, is a battle to win; but all fear vanishes when you are my general. I rehearse at the theatre every day, from twelve to three or four o'clock. Either before or after that. I will be punctual at whatever hour you appoint.

Another time she addresses him as "*Celui que j'aime le plus au monde*," and ends her letter "*Votre quatrième fille*." She tells him the courage it gives her to work with him.

MY DEAR PROFESSOR, — Only three hours ago the curtain rose, and cries of "Silence!" were heard, to listen to Racine's verses, and at the same time your pupil. They gave *Mithridate*, and my success, if I dare say so, was complete. I did my best to remember your lessons, above all those you gave me at Saint Germain.

"The day before the performance of *Mithridate*," M. Samson tells us, "we made an expedition to the forest of Saint Germain, my wife, my children, and myself, and there she had read over the *rôle* of Monime with me." This letter shows the nervousness Rachel experienced whenever she acted a new *rôle*.

DEAR SAMSON, — You allowed me to send you two stalls. Poor Rachel's *intentions*, perhaps, may be weak to-night, but her emotions will be strong in her *rôle* of Fatima. I feel half dead with terror. May Providence support me and satisfy your expectations.

To Madame Toussaint, Samson's daughter, she writes: —

Your father was pleased, then, with my little crown? If I were not afraid of making him angry, I would send him all of them, for they are his. Ah! why doesn't all France know M. Samson as I know him? They would adore him.

Then come two letters, written when she was studying Phèdre.

I would like to go over my *rôle* of Hermione with you. I went to supper yesterday evening at M. Bodez; I came home late, and my maid has only this instant wakened me. I am afraid it is too late for you, but thought I would let you know I have studied Phèdre a great deal. I will go to-morrow to ask you the result of my profound meditations.

Your pupil and friend begs you to come and hear the general rehearsal, which takes place at half past seven punctually. Your consent will inspire her with courage and your counsels with strength.

One more letter we must give; it is written from London during her visit in 1850, and shows how in the midst of many perplexities, disappointments, and sorrows Rachel still turned with affection to her old teacher. It is addressed to his daughter, Madame Toussaint.

It is eleven o'clock; I have just left the theatre. I acted Horace; how frightened I was! The curtain went up; an appalling silence. I entered, thunders of applause greeted me; then my terror increased fourfold. I began the first act; the public seemed more astonished than pleased at my manner of speaking, but as soon as they understood, my success began. The arm-chair scene in the fourth act made the greatest sensation, and at the end of the monologue several crowns fell at my feet. Why was he not there, your good father? How delighted he would have been to see that real art is understood everywhere. Why was he not there to complete my success by saying, "You did well, my child"?

Your father grieves me; he has not written yet. When you have read my letter, go to him, say to him, "Dear father, Rachel is far from us, she is sad: we must console her." And I am sure he will sit down to his *bureau* and write. Do not forget to do this, Adèle. I need it.

Poor, passionate, jealous, lovable, unhappy Rachel. Ever wandering away from what she knew to be right, and then, like the prodigal, confessing and begging to be forgiven.

In the Appendix to the life of Samson there are some reminiscences related of the great actress by his widow, showing so thoroughly her bad and good qualities, that we cannot resist giving them as they are told.

On the 14th April, 1849, Samson acted as the Prince de Bouillon in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, Rachel playing the title *rôle*. Madame Samson tells us:—

My husband had quarrelled for the second or third time with his illustrious pupil, when the theatre undertook to represent M. Legouvé's piece. Rachel, it appears, had mentioned Samson to the author as a suitable representative for the Prince de Bouillon's part, but Legouvé was afraid he would refuse it in consequence of the quarrel between master and pupil. Samson, however, accepted, and the following incident took place at the first rehearsal. When Adrienne turns to Michonnet and says, "There is my true friend, he to whom I owe everything," those present were astonished to see Rachel, instead of turning towards Regnier, who acted Michonnet, turn towards Samson, saying these words, and holding out her hand. The professor, of course, was mollified at once, and held out his. Rachel thereupon threw herself into his arms, which made tears come into the eyes of all those present.

Madame Samson describes another episode that took place between Rachel and her old master, on the evening of the 4th February, 1853, when they were acting Madame de Girardin's *Lady Tartuffe* together.

Samson, after twenty-seven years' service, was about to give a representation on the occasion of his retirement, and Rachel had promised to play Cléopâtre; every day, however, she changed her mind on the subject of the *rôle*, asking for different people for different parts, and next day upsetting the arrangements made the day before. Her caprices wore out my husband at last. She had not kept several appointments that she had made, excusing herself on the plea of ill-health, and asking Samson to come to her (a thing which he seldom did).

He consented, however, and on the appointed day presented himself at the hôtel of this capricious pupil. Her carriage was at the door. The professor concluded that she was going out. The servant informed him, however, that Madame was not at home. Unaccustomed to treatment of this sort, above all by a woman who was under so many obligations to him, Samson left, vowing that he would never enter Rachel's house again.

On that evening *Lady Tartuffe* was given at the Français, and Samson had to act several sentimental scenes with her. Not having had an opportunity of speaking to Samson in the side scenes, the actress found herself most uncomfortably situated, having to act a pantomime with him, in which both are supposed to be whispering words of love to one another. This is what passed: —

Rachel (smiling coquettishly). — "You are angry with me for what took place this morning, M. Samson?"

Samson (looking at her affectionately). — "Dear me, no! the proceeding was most gracious."

Rachel (pretending to be deeply grieved). — "I was obliged to go out, and had quite forgotten our appointment."

Samson (tenderly). — "How could you expect me not to be flattered by such oblivion!"

Rachel (raising her eyes and looking at him) — "It was on important business. I see you do not believe me."

Samson (apparently charmed). — "I, not believe you? Impossible!"

Rachel (looking down). — "Come to-morrow, I will tell you the real reason."

Samson (smiling gently). — "Ah! It was not the real reason I was given, then? But it is quite impossible to call on you again; quite impossible."

Rachel (as if she were making a proposal). — "I will come to you, then."

Samson (triumphant). — "You will not find me at home."

Rachel (still tenderly). — "You will not teach me my *rôle*, then?"

Samson (apparently quite conquered). — "I do not like caprices and impertinences."

Next day Samson wrote to his pupil, telling her that he would not ask her to appear in her new *rôle* of Cléopâtre for his benefit, but would be satisfied with whatever part of her *répertoire* she chose to act. Rachel's pride was deeply offended; she imagined that all the success of the representation depended on her and on her alone. Still more offended when she learned that Madame Arnould Plessy was coming from St. Petersburg to offer the support of her talent and name for the benefit of her old master. She had been absent for ten years in Russia, and the Parisians were anxious to see the actress once so popular.

Rachel and Beauvallet had arranged to act in *Andromaque*, Samson and Madame Arnould in *Les Fausses Confidences*, aided by Madame Desmousseaux. The tragedy was received rather coldly by the large and brilliant audience that crowded the theatre in every part. All the success was for Plessy, who acted charmingly, and Samson, the "bénéficiaire." Both were recalled several times, and saluted by thunders of applause and showers of bouquets.

A supper had been arranged for all the performers at Samson's house; at the last moment, however, the following note was received from Rachel: —

DEAR MADAME SAMSON. — When I promised to come to supper to you to-night, I forgot I had already told my mother I would go to her. I should be sorry to disappoint her. Present my compliments to Madame Arnould Plessy, who acted remarkably well.

Votre dévouée,

RACHEL.

CHAPTER XI.

GENIUS AND CHARACTER.

RACHEL attained her majority in the year 1842, and became a free agent, to live where she pleased and spend her fortune as she chose. It was currently reported that, although by her genius and exertions the Félix family had been raised to a comparatively brilliant position, and though her money educated the younger children, and clothed, housed, and fed them all, "*le père aux écus*" only allowed her 300 francs a month for her dress, including theatrical costumes and pocket-money. This sum she found altogether inadequate, and had frequently begged her father to increase it, which he persistently refused to do. As soon, therefore, as she was legally entitled to the disposal of the large salary she was making, at the instigation of a male friend, who was then all-powerful, she left her parents' house, and installed herself in an apartment on the Quai Voltaire, which she furnished at her own expense, leaving them in undisturbed possession of the

apartment in the Rue du Luxembourg and all it contained.

A great deal has been said about Rachel's avarice, and many were the accusations made against her in Paris. But, before believing them, we must remember that the good and bad qualities of a woman, placed in such a position as hers, are always exaggerated by the public, and she, with her proud unyielding nature, was not likely in any way to endeavor to mitigate their adverse opinion or to seek to gain a favorable one. That she inherited the great fault of her race, love of money, there is little doubt; and yet from numerous sources we know of instances of royal munificence shown to people who could be of no use to her, and from whom she could expect no return.

During her tour in Russia she showed her open-handed generosity to the poor of St. Petersburg by writing to Prince Odowsky: "I took my benefit yesterday. To-day I remember the poor. Is it not the truest proof of happiness to remember the unhappy? I hope you will accept a portion of my profits for them, and, believe me, you will add to my gratitude by taking this gift from an artist who sympathizes with all her heart in those sentiments which induce us to mitigate the miseries of our suffering fellow-creatures." Another to Count Pahlen is

written to the same effect. It is true that she carried back from the Russian campaign profits to the extent of 300,000 francs, and that, to a certain degree, this 300,000 francs was filched from the pockets of her comrades at the Comédie Française, this *congé* being taken in direct opposition to their wishes and interests. "*Est il gentil de M. Houssaye de me laisser faire cela, car il pourrait me le défendre!*" She knew perfectly well that the new manager, Arsène Houssaye, her "*directeur spirituel*," as she was pleased to call him, when he allowed her to do what she liked, was completely under the sway of her fascination and despotism.

Rachel's indignant anger at the calumnies that were circulated about her avarice was unbounded. Rothschild, her friend, tried to comfort her one day. "If I had given," he said, "to all those who have asked me, I should be obliged to borrow a hundred sous of you now." "My dear Baron, you are only importuned in Paris, since you do not go to make money in the provinces; but I am pestered all over the world with suppliants and beggars."

The following answer to one of these requests shows the dignity and directness with which she could dispose of inopportune demands: —

MON CHER MONSIEUR, — Si je vous envoyais ces 500 francs, je serais peut être à en avoir besoin quand vous

seriez gêné de me les rendre. Si vous me permettez, de vous envoyer 100 francs, je suis, au contraire, bien certaine, qu'ils ne me feront jamais défaut, ce qui vous permettra d'en agir à votre aise. Les voici donc, comprenez moi. Mille civilités.

She wrote to a celebrated banker: —

MONSIEUR, — Mon ami, M. ——, prétend que je n'ai *qu'un mot* à vous écrire pour lui faire obtenir un cinquantaine d'actions des chemins de fer autrichiens. Si vous voulez bien en ajouter cinquante pour chaque mot de plus, l'excédent sera pour votre toute dévouée.

Rachel left, it is true, 1,500,000 francs, but, on the other hand, she gained more than four millions; if she had spent 50,000 francs a year from 1838, she would have accumulated three millions to leave behind her. Avaricious, however, as she was reputed to be in some things, she devoted herself to her friends with almost prodigal generosity. On the day Michel Lévy lost his first action against Dumas, she sent to tell him that she had 200,000 francs at his service.

She heard of the suicide of an unfortunate man, Saint-Edmé by name, who, unable to make enough to purchase the necessaries of life for himself and his four children, committed suicide. He had begun his literary career by contributing to a collection of biographies of all the notable people of the day, and amongst

others had written a sketch of Rachel. She alludes to this in the following letter: —

> It would be useless to endeavor to tell you the impression that the death of poor Saint-Aime has made upon me. I read his pitiable confession in the papers, and am grieved beyond measure that I did not know of his terrible position, for I am certain I have influential friends who would have lent him a helping hand. This sad end of my first biographer depresses me dreadfully; for the last three nights I have seen the unfortunate man hanging to the block of wood he had saved out of his wring and placed across the doors of the library, from which all the books had gone. I have re-read in his "Biographies of Remarkable People" the praises he heaped on little Rachel Felix, and I asked myself, reproachfully, if a man who had helped me so early ought thus to perish of cold, hunger, and misery; the only excuse I can plead is entire ignorance of his state. It seems he had not even money enough to buy a pistol! These sentences in his own confession are terrible in their brevity: "Alone, without comfort or hope, pursued by misfortune, poverty, humiliated, calumniated, scorned, I saw only one mode of escape from my misery — suicide." Unfortunate man! he leaves four children, and had the courage or the cowardice to die. Find out for me where the children are; I wish to send them 500 francs, my profits yesterday in Camille. I feel sad and depressed these last few days, and should like to go away for a time.

We could multiply many other instances of Rachel's kindness of heart, particularly towards genius struggling under difficulties. On one occasion a young author, very poor, and yet

enjoying a certain degree of poetical reputation, had completed a three-act comedy in verse. He presented it to the Théâtre Français and it was rejected. The poet was in despair, when Rachel took him on one side. "I know an Englishman who has a mania for unpublished manuscripts," she said to him; "will you let me have yours for a thousand francs?" The poet gladly consented; the actress gave him the money and kept him to dinner. A week later the manuscript was magnificently bound and placed in her private library.

The authenticity of the following occurrence is vouched for by the Marquis de Gondrexante.

In the month of August, 1849, Mademoiselle Rachel was travelling through Brittany and Normandy, going to Caen; she stopped for a few hours at Saint Denis-le-Guast. She there remarked a peasant boy of about thirteen years of age reading the life of Arondino. She approached him and asked what he was so interested in.

"Why, is it possible those are the books they give you as prizes? What a pity to waste your time on that. Read Racine and Corneille. You have not got them?"

"No, Mademoiselle."

"What is your name?"

"Armand le Brun."

"There, go and buy some books," and she insisted on his taking two louis. "As to Corneille and Racine, I will send them to you."

Three months passed. The peasant boy no longer counted on the promise of the great lady, when he received one morning two volumes beautifully bound, his name on the cover in gilt letters, and on the first page was written, "*Donné à Armand le Brun, à qui je souhaite un bel avenir,* RACHEL."

The tragedian loved gambling, and whenever she could would get up a game of cards or loto with her family. If she lost twenty or thirty sous, she became furious, and raged against the whole world. Then her brother would ask her for two thousand francs, of which he stood in pressing need, and she would give them without a word. The fact is that in money affairs, as in everything else, Rachel was a singular mixture of contradictions and inconsistencies. Many instances were recorded of the impulsive generosity with which she would offer or give presents to her friends, and then repent of her prodigality and retract the offer or take back the present again. "If I were obliged to give all I have ever promised," she said once, alluding to this propensity to a friend, "the whole world would not furnish me with the means."

Now and then, however, those who knew her, aware of this weakness, insisted on making her keep her word. One day a matter-of-fact friend admired a beautifully embroidered chair that stood in the actress's *boudoir*.

"It is my work, let me give it to you as a remembrance. I insist upon sending it to your rooms."

"I am so much obliged; but, as you do give it to me, I will take it *now* and not trouble you to send it."

"But," she said, perplexed, "how do you propose to take it?"

"You will see."

In a moment he ran downstairs, and returning shortly with a commissionaire, told him to carry off the prize."

She gave a ring to Dumas the younger, who handed the gift back, with the words, "I return it, so that you may not be obliged to ask me for it." She gave a Damascus sword to Beauvallet the actor, who said immediately, "I warn you you shall not take it back again, for I will have a chain put to it."

There are many amusing anecdotes told, too, of the barefaced manner in which Rachel asked for things. Arsène Houssaye relates that one evening she was dining with the Minister of the Interior, Comte Duchâtel. She expressed her

admiration of the centre-piece on the table that was decorated with flowers. M. Duchâtel immediately bent forward and despoiled it of its flowers, which he offered to the young actress.

"Oh! it was not the flowers, but the bowl I admired so much," she said, with a smile.

"You shall have it, then, as well as the flowers," answered her host in a sudden fit of generosity.

"Monsieur le Comte," was the answer, "your roses and violets delight my heart, but your centre-piece will be the ornament and wonder of my dining-room."

Rachel had come in a cab to dinner; when the time for leaving approached, the Minister offered her his brougham to take her home.

"With pleasure," she said; "then I can take your present with me without fear of being waylaid and robbed."

Her host conducted her to the top of the staircase himself. "I am delighted, Mademoiselle," he said, with a sarcastic smile, as he bade her good-night, "that you should have my silver bowl; but you will send me back my brougham, will you not?"

"Often," Houssaye adds, "did I dine at Rachel's and see the bowl, made on the model of Pliny's doves in the Capitol, and smile a sympathetic smile of fellow-feeling as I remembered

the story connected with it, for many were the things she had rifled me of."

She was not the daughter of the Jew pedler, or Esther Haya his wife, seller of old clothes, for nothing. She took a childish delight in making a "good bargain," imposing too far, sometimes, on the credulity of her neighbors. We all of us know the celebrated story of the guitar. A friend of the tragedian possessed an old guitar; Rachel saw it and asked her friend for it. It was given willingly as a piece of rubbish. Achille Fould called on Rachel a few days afterwards, and noticed the guitar hanging in a silk net, through the bright meshes of which the dark wood showed to great advantage.

"That is the guitar I made a few sous by when I sang in the streets as a little beggar-girl," said Rachel, sentimentally.

"Give it to me; I will value it more than you do."

"I dare say you will, for I cannot let you have it for less than a thousand louis."

Fould, being a financier, offered half what she asked. He had reckoned without his host. Rachel would not abate one jot of her demand, and he submitted with a good grace. The new owner of the guitar showed his acquisition with pride to his friends. Unfortunately, one day the original possessor called; on hearing the

romantic tale M. Fould related, she burst out laughing, and the pedigree of the guitar came out. Some one told the occurrence to Rachel, who smiled and said, "Yes, I know; poor Fould was so furious."

It is needless to say that many of the stories told against her were the outcome of the jealousy her great and unprecedented success had excited. We have already seen how Védel, the director of the Théâtre Français, had been obliged, at the beginning of Rachel's career, to put down the pretensions of the other *sociétaires;* they still, naturally enough perhaps, cherished a feeling of resentment, and certainly Rachel made no effort to propitiate them. They accused her of endeavoring to concentrate on herself all the attention of the public, of never playing to her fellow-actors. They said she kept aloof from her companions, never answered them when the action of the play required it, or heard them when it was their turn to reply to her. Sometimes the most ridiculous *contretemps* occurred in consequence; she would either appear too soon, or leave the other actors on the stage, talking to space. All this naturally incensed her comrades, and made them only too anxious to join the large party of those hostile to her in their own profession, and among literary men and the public. A rival to the

throne usurped (as they called it) by the despotic young queen was set up; she proved a most inadequate one in every respect, but so hot was the partisanship, that they not only applauded Mademoiselle Maxime, but dared to hiss Rachel. She expressed her offended feelings in no way, but calmly awaited her opportunity. It soon came. One evening *Marie Stuart* was given. Maxime was to act Elizabeth, and Rachel the part of the imprisoned Queen. The theatre was filled with an excited crowd, who had evidently come there to pass judgment on the two actresses. Maxime, at every word, at every gesture, was applauded to the echo. Rachel awaited calmly the great scene in the third act between the two rivals, and then so tremendous, so grand was her acting, that she simply carried her audience away in a frenzy of delight, as she had done before on that celebrated evening when she played *Bajazet* in spite of Janin and his "clique." With a disdainful smile on her lips and a triumphant gleam in her eyes she turned towards the supporters of Mademoiselle Maxime, with the words of Marie Stuart, "*J'enfonce le poignard au sein de ma rivale.*"

Maxime never dared to show herself on the same stage as Rachel again, and disappeared into the secondary position from which she ought never to have been raised and to which

her talents alone entitled her. Until midnight that night an impatient crowd waited for Rachel at the stage-door, and greeted her, when she appeared, with loud and prolonged cheers. During the whole of her theatrical career Rachel boasted of her influence over the pit. She could shake them with the power of her passion. There was a perfect understanding between the actress and them, — an alliance strong enough to break down any favoritism or party that either the literary or theatrical world might endeavor to use against her. On her great nights, in *Camille* or *Phèdre*, the audience, to the very lowest among the "gods," would sit gazing on the stage, scarcely daring to breathe. "*On entendait voler une mouche*," Jules Janin says — in the midst of the almost supernatural silence.

Many were the charges brought against Rachel's genius. She was artificial, stilted, wanting in tenderness, too fond of making points at the expense of the subtler gradations of feeling; but all were unanimous that at times she was superhuman in her passion and emotion. She tore aside the veil that hid the higher spiritual world, and appealed to sentiments so profound and primeval that men were startled for the first time into the consciousness that they possessed them. Some will deny that the art of acting admits of original genius. They will say

the actor is merely an interpreter, not a creator, and therefore must be denied the higher qualities of genius. But Rachel stepped beyond the domain of interpreter. She was never lost in her part; the part was lost in her. It was not Corneille, it was not Racine, but more than these had ever dreamt. Corneille never intended to represent all that she represented in her conception of Camille; and Racine never imagined or created anything so magnificent or soul-stirring as she imagined or created in Phèdre.

This comprehension and inspiration was not invariably with her. On the first, and even second, representation of a new *rôle* she often disappointed her most ardent admirers. All her study and preparation seemed in vain, and, sad and depressed, they murmured the word "failure." But, when all seemed lost, an illumination came to her. "*Les dieux sont avec moi*," as she herself once said; and when they were, she electrified her audience by her eloquence and power. She said to those about her, when attempting a new *rôle*, "I am paralyzed; I feel as if I had chains on," stretching out her arms as she spoke like a bird spreading out its wings. She was always oppressed on first nights, too, by the preponderance of newspaper critics.

"Ah! once inspiration comes to me," she said one day, "I feel as joyous as a lark, that

rises, and rises, and rises, ever higher, singing as it flies. I have felt drunk with success. But then the reaction comes; there is no more ascending, and I fall back tired in the grass, having failed to reach the highest point. Thus it is with everything. We aspire to everything, but grasp nothing." Rachel's words are confirmed by all those who saw her act. By imperceptible degrees her passion, pitched in a low key at first, rose higher and higher, until it reached the climax, and flashed out wild and reckless in its sweep. Then her strength seemed to ebb away, leaving her exhausted, and hardly able to act to the end.

With the love of hyperbole, so common among the crowd, Rachel's want of education and literary taste has always been greatly exaggerated. A recent writer in the *Nineteenth Century* talks of her well-known "obtuseness of perception" and deficiency of "critical judgment." There is little doubt, as Samson tells us, that, in consequence of the poverty of her parents, her education was very much neglected, and that her success on the stage was made at too early an age to admit of regular study afterwards; but that she was "obtuse in perception" is utterly inaccurate. On the contrary, what raises both Rachel and Talma so far above all others in their profession was their extraordinary "intellectual power." The idea of her deficiency in

critical faculty gained substantiality from the bad plays she accepted and the good ones she rejected. Outsiders did not see the social and expedient reasons that so often influenced her in so doing; and we must remember that her choice was by no means final, and was always ratified or rejected by the Committee of the Théâtre Français. If they, then — professionals practised in catering for the public taste — were led away, how much more must she have been, who had her friends, such as pretty and charming Madame de Girardin, to think of, and a host of other considerations!

Janin first gave currency to the exaggerated statements of her ignorance in his weekly *feuilleton*. He declared that he met her the day after she had taken Paris by storm in the part of Camille. "*C'est moi que j'etai t'au Gymnase*," was her greeting; "to which," he says, "I was obliged to answer in the same jargon, '*Je le savions*.'"

Count Molé, one of the would-be connoisseurs moving in artistic society in Paris, wishing to pay the young actress a compliment, said to her one evening at a dinner at Véron's, "You have saved the French language, Mademoiselle, from the hosts of barbarians who endeavor to destroy it." "Monsieur," she said, "that is the more wonderful, seeing that I never knew it."

She was the first to confess her own deficiencies and laugh at them. She writes to Madame la Comtesse Duchâtel: —

MADAME LA COMTESSE. — You do me the honor of asking for a few lines written by me hand for your album, saying that you often applaud me with both yours! I do not know if you will approve your own idea when, in the midst of your brilliant conversation, you see the scrawl of a woman who is much more capable of repeating the verses of others than of writing her own prose.

"Little pedant," she said, with an air of the utmost dignity, to Rebecca one day, when she made some observation about her great sister's grammar, "let me inform you that women like myself make and unmake grammar as they please."

On one occasion she had to write a letter of thanks to the Minister for Home Affairs, M. Baroche. Before sending it she showed it to Arsène Houssaye, who advised her to recopy it, and correct some orthographical errors.

"Ah, bah!" she replied; "let them stand. My letter will appear all the more sincere."

Collectors of autographs in Paris are said to pay from five to ten guineas for a letter of Rachel. They must, however, bear the authentic press-mark. "*Un bel autograph de moi,*" as she says herself, "*avec ou sans orthographe.*" In spite of her want of orthography, however,

Rachel occupies a foremost place in the ranks of distinguished French letter-writers; but it is a place widely distinguished from literary women like Madame de Sevigné, George Sand, or Madame de Girardin. She was, as we have said, perfectly uneducated, knowing nothing of history, grammar, or literature; but in this, as in everything else, she showed that quick intelligence and discernment that characterized her in all she did, socially or artistically.

Her letters, written to various correspondents upon miscellaneous subjects, are delightfully sprightly and amusing, illumined every here and there by proofs of good sense, quick judgment, and nice feeling, that go far to disprove the wholesale abuse that has been heaped on the actress's private character by her contemporaries. That saving clause, love of kindred and obedient reverence for her parents, is apparent in every letter written to the different members of her family; while the delicately veiled satire with which she makes fun of those who endeavor to utilize her genius for their own ends, and the warm gratitude with which she refers to those who have really been kind and helpful during her artistic career, speak equally well for her head and heart. The following is a good specimen of her lighter and more playful style. She had accepted a play of M. Ponsard — *Charlotte*

Corday — and then, as was too often the case, refused to act it. This behavior had brought down the wrath of five or six of the "ogres" of the Parisian press upon her. They must be cajoled and talked over before she dare appear again.

Dimanche. It seems I am in disgrace, if what Houssaye tells me is true. We are pure to appear on Wednesday, To-morrow, Monday, after the general rehearsal. I will put on my little pink bonnet and will go and see five or six of the principal men, beginning with the great Jules, who, they say, knows of three who will try but the loudest. My pink bonnet, do you hear? I tell you they are done for. I keep what it, as Cleopatra tried her poisons on her slaves. The effect is certain. When I put it on last week, with a black flounced dress, young X —— was quite stupefied, and has remained so ever since — was so, indeed, before he saw me, for prudential motives, doubtless.

Rachel was a *raconteuse* of the first order. The following amusing story is told in the same letter: —

I found an old medal in a box to-day: the history of that medal is worth its weight in gold. One day in 1847, X —— told me he would bring Lord Granville to see me. I wanted to ask said Lord's advice about my visit to London. He did not bring him. I complained, and he swore that before three days were over he would redeem his promise. I demanded a guarantee. He offered me his watch. I refused to take it. His word was not to be depended on. As I was on the point of asking for his

wig, he put his hand into his pocket and found his Deputy's medal. Just the thing! I never saw Lord Granville, nor X—— his medal. It seems he managed without it. But see what a good turn I did him by confiscating the passport with the head of poor father Louis Philippe imprinted upon it. 1848 came, then February, then all that you wot of, and many things you wot not of. Amongst others, this: On the 28th or 29th—I am not well up in my French history—said member was stopped at the door by order of the new brooms in power at the moment. "You cannot pass here without proving your identity." He looked in all his pockets, no medal. He galloped off to my house, no Rachel. He rushed to the theatre, to my mother's, to the devil: I was nowhere to be found; and, meantime, the fate of the kingdom was decided "*à un point de la discorde.*" In short, my friend, read the papers of the time, and you will see that, thanks to my confiscation of his medal, X—— escaped beautifully; for, his name not having appeared amongst the others that were compromised, he passed for a fervent Republican, and you know how he has justified the opinion. This morning I found this famous medal, for keeping which, I think, my friend owes me a "candle." Inasmuch as at the time I swore I had lost it, I do not choose to send it back to him now, especially as it might recall uncomfortably the change his political opinions have undergone.

You have many *curios*: keep this medal belonging to a deputy of the year 1848. Some day it might amuse people to tell the story. It is rather in the style of Scribe's *Verre d'Eau.* After mature deliberation, I think it better to suppress names.

Rachel never abstained, for the sake of a good story, from turning the laugh against herself.

Among the curious letters which she received in the course of her theatrical career was the following one. She had complained that the chief of the *claque* had not awarded her enough applause, and he expostulated as follows: —

MADEMOISELLE, — I cannot remain under the obloquy of a reproach from lips such as yours. The following is an authentic statement of what occurred: at the first representation I led the attack in person not less than thirty-three times. We had three acclamations, four hilarities, two thrilling movements, four renewals of applause, and two indefinite explosions. In fact, to such an extent did we carry our applause, that the occupants of the stalls were scandalized, and cried, "Turn them out!" My men were positively exhausted with fatigue, and even intimated to me that they could not again go through such an evening. Seeing this was the case, I applied for the MS., and after having profoundly studied the piece, I was obliged to make up my mind to certain curtailments in the service of my men. I, however, only applied them to MM. ——, and if the *ad interim* office I hold affords me the opportunity, I will make them ample amends. In such a situation as I have just depicted, I have only to request you to believe firmly in my profound admiration and respectful zeal; and I venture to entreat you to have some consideration for the difficulties that environ me.

When it was decided to do away with the *claque* of the Théâtre Français, in 1871, some of the older members, "*Les Romains*," recalled the reminiscences of past times in conversation with

the manager, and mentioned Rachel with tears in their eyes.

It is very difficult to form an accurate estimate of the personal character of Rachel. Frenchmen, who, as biographers, are generally impartial and calm-judging, indulge, in her case, as we said before, in inflated praise or exaggerated blame. She seems to have been endowed with the fictitious passions with which, in her imaginary creations, she swayed the public who crowded to see her. Were it not for the letters published recently by M. Heylli, we might imagine her, on the one side, to have been a Phèdre in her superhuman and violent passions, and, on the other, a Pauline in her heroism and devotion. Here, however, we see her thinking in the earlier days of the education of her little brother and sisters, and later, when she had children of her own, occupied with the thousand and one trifles pertaining to their dress and well being, writing to her mother to see that "Gabri" (her son Gabriel) wears his new suit, "that he may be as fine as his brother on the day of the prize-giving," telling her that there are some white trousers, a pair for each, put away in her room. "As they are only just made, I should like them sent to the wash first. I will allow you, Madame Félix, to offer a small black cravat and gray gloves to each of your grand-

children. I think Gabri wants a new cap. Your daughter, who is strong and well, thank goodness, gives you a good hug."

Later, in a letter, she shows herself solicitous about the literary attainments of her son Alexandre, and expresses a hope that she may soon receive a long letter from him.

Rachel had a horror of scandalmongers, those panderers to the morbid tastes of the crowd, who crave unceasingly to know the weaknesses and imperfections of those superior to them either in intellect or rank. Among her letters are some dashed off while she was smarting under the sting of certain cruel words or untrue statements.

On vous demande, Monsieur, si sachant Mademoiselle Rachel mariée, ou en situation de permettre à un homme de prendre soit et cause pour elle, vous oseriez écrire sur elle ce qu'on a le grand tort de lui faire lire dans votre journal. Quant à l'artiste, elle serait fort lâche de vous insulter à propos des libertés de votre plume, car vous ne sauriez à qui demander raison — une raison dont vous avez besoin, Monsieur, car celui qui écrit comme vous l'avez fait est en démence.

Mademoiselle Rachel vous salue.

Charles Maurice, editor of a theatrical paper, had not only written articles against her in his paper, but had also published one or two pamphlets that were most scurrilous and abusive.

She alludes to one of these, *La Vérité Rachel*, in the following: —

> I have received the pamphlet with the lady who, her toes on a plate, represents, or is intended to represent, Truth. It is a collection of delightful and gracious things, which does not disturb my equilibrium in the least. It seems I have neither "skill nor intelligence nor taste," not even a glimmer, my dear friend! After all, why need I pay the least attention to such nonsense? I am accustomed to this sort of thing from the same gentleman; and then he who seeks to prove too much proves nothing. I will admit I am a little stupid, not very intelligent, and not gifted with exquisite taste: but to be deficient in everything, hopelessly, incurably! That, dear friend, is the reason I can afford to laugh at the pamphlet and its author. It does not prevent the fact that this tragedian, without skill, intelligence, or taste, made 5,000 francs yesterday evening. You can understand why I am perfectly indifferent to everything else.

"The only answer to be made to such a production," says Janin, alluding to the *Vérité Rachel*, "is that of Madame de Staël to the man who, knowing how prejudiced she was against Napoleon, once said before her that 'Napoleon Bonaparte had neither talent nor courage.' 'Monsieur,' answered the authoress of *Corinne* severely, 'you will find great difficulty in persuading me that Europe has remained for fifteen years prostrate at the feet of a fool and a coward.'"

A great many irrelevancies have been put forward and much bad logic perpetrated lately on the subject of the morality of the stage. On the one hand, it is maintained that very few women can preserve their modesty and virtue, subjected to the unnatural life and numerous temptations to which they are exposed in a theatrical career; on the other, it is stated that the stage is as honorable and honest a calling as man or woman can take up, and examples have been brought forward to prove the statement. But considering the numbers who throng the stage, the very persistency with which these few examples are referred to, and the smallness of their number, is rather a demonstration that the ordinary level of theatrical morality is not particularly high. "*Pour juger la comédienne il ne faut pas se mettre au même point de vue que pour juger la bourgeoise,*" says a well-known French theatrical critic; and his opinion is indorsed by most of those who impartially consider the question. In judging the virtues and vices of those who cater for the amusement of the public as playwrights, the same code of propriety will not hold good as for men and women in the ordinary walks of life. The nervous, excitable temperament is a necessary accompaniment of the dramatic one. The actress, before she can adequately portray fictitious emotion or

passion of any kind, must be susceptible to emotion and passion herself. After acting one of her great parts, Rachel, unable to sleep, so great had been the mental tension, would wander about all night, sometimes going out of Paris as far as the Bois de Boulogne, where, in her childhood, she had spent so many hours robbed from school.

Intoxicated by applause, carried away by "*les émotions suprêmes du théâtre*" night after night, dazzled by the glare of the footlights, listening every evening to declarations of fictitious love, how is it possible the young actress should view life from the calm and temperate view of her more fortunate sisters, who live intrenched behind the barriers necessity and experience have taught mankind are necessary for the preservation of social morality.

Rachel had not passed through Saint Cyr, as she said herself. Indeed, when we remember what her early surroundings were, — those corroding years of poverty and squalor, when the bloom and ingenuousness of youth were rubbed off — singing songs of doubtful morality and expression through the streets of Paris, "that great, wicked, intelligent city," as she herself calls it, and (fatal ingredient of all theatrical representation for female modesty and virtue), obliged to seek applause and popularity at all

hazards, and purchase it by all concessions. Seeing little of her mother, whose time was taken up with the cares of a young family, exposed to the constant companionship of her sister Sarah, a frivolous, pleasure-loving soul, we can only wonder that she preserved as much refinement and dignity as she did.

"Rachel was not good," is the verdict passed upon her by Charlotte Bronte. According to no law, human or divine, can we, who have undertaken to write her biography, say she was good. We should not be relating a fair and impartial story if we said she was "good." We only seek to mitigate the severity of the sentence that has already been passed by endeavoring to show that, amid the passionate violences with which she now and then disfigured her life, there were noble instincts, the sentiment of great and beautiful things, and that for years of her girlhood she was animated by an ardent love for intellectual pleasures, and an unswerving aspiration towards the highest ideal her art could offer her.

Like so many women in her profession, who live on shadows and unrealities, when she did choose among the crowd of worshippers that surrounded her, she chose unwisely. Many are the different versions given of the affair, which threw the Paris of her day into a ferment.

Suffice it to say, she found the man to whom she entrusted her heart, one of her own nationality, unworthy of her confidence, and was compelled to discard him. His method of revenge was one happily rare even among the basest of his sex. He made known the whole affair to the world, and published her letters. Many refused to believe the story of her dishonor, especially coming from such a source; but others, whom envy or interested motives had made her enemies, — and they were not few, — sided against the young girl (she was only twenty at the time) and gave currency to the scandal.

It is less difficult, we are told, for a woman to become famous by her genius than to be pardoned for it. Rachel did not even solicit forgiveness. With the reckless pride and almost "ferocity" of her nature, she did not attempt to defend herself, and, partly out of pique, partly because driven to bay, she cast appearances to the winds, and formed a connection with Count Walewski, a natural son of Napoleon by a Polish lady. In 1844 she bore him a son whom the father openly acknowledged. In those days the social anomaly of *Mademoiselle Rachel Félix et son fils* was not permitted, and society banished her from its ranks.

She might sometimes still be met in the literary and artistic circle of the beautiful Madame

de Girardin, particularly when the gifted hostess desired to obtain the inestimable benefit of the great tragedian's interpretation of her mediocre Cleopatras and Judiths; but the *salons* of the Faubourg were shut against her forever; and, on her second visit to England, she found an appreciable difference in the warmth of the reception accorded to her in private circles. The critics now talked of her as grasping, sensual, and selfish. "Her grand reserved manner, snatched up as a dress," writes one, "could be flung down by her as such at any moment."

All the base envies and jealousies before and behind the scenes were used as weapons against her, and she was subjected to the basest persecution. Sometimes the young lioness rose in her wrath, and we see her retaliating on her tormentors, as in the letter given above, or using the cutting lash of irony, at which she was so skilled an adept, as in the taunts she addresses to Charles Maurice. She was generous in her animosities, however. During the *coup d'état*, this latter critic, who had frequently treated her with equal severity, was gravely compromised. She heard of it, and never rested for two whole days until she had restored him to liberty, "to write against her still."

CHAPTER XII.

VASHTI.

In the year 1842 Rachel went, for the first time, to Belgium. Her stay there only lasted a month — from the 22d of July to the 29th of August. It was then that the pale, insignificant school-girl from the Rue d'Isabey looked at her, with eager hazel eyes, seeking to read the riddle of her life, and listened to her with a heart throbbing to every heart-throb of the actress; for did not the star of genius shine on her brow also? and, diverse as were their lives, and far apart as lay the paths they each of them trod, had not the same "efflux of sacred essence" descended on them both from above? "Vashti was not good, I was told, and I have said she did not look good," writes demurely the daughter of the Yorkshire clergyman; and yet, in spite of this judgment, how instinct with comprehension and appreciation is every line of the following description, one of the most eloquent Charlotte Brontë ever wrote: —

He mentioned a name that thrilled me — a name that in these days could fill Europe. It is hushed now; its once restless echoes are all still; she who bore it went years ago to her rest; night and oblivion long since closed above her; but then her day — a day of genius — stood at its full height, light, and power. The theatre was full — crowded to its roof; royal and noble were there; palace and hovel had emptied their inmates into those tiers, so thronged and so hushed.

Dimly did I feel myself privileged as having a place before that stage; I longed to see a being of whose powers I had heard reports which made me conceive no mean anticipations. I wondered if she would justify her renown; with strange curiosity, with feelings severe and austere, yet of rivetting interest, I waited. She was a study of such nature as had not encountered my eyes yet; a great and new planet she was, but in what shape? I waited her rising.

She rose as nine that December night; above the horizon I saw her come. She could shine yet with pale grandeur and steady might; but that star verged already on its judgment day. Scent near, it was a chaos — hollow, half-consumed; an orb perished or perishing — half lava, half glow. I had heard the woman termed "plain," and I expected bony hardness and grimness — something large, angular, sallow. What I saw was the shadow of a royal Vashti: a queen, fair as the day once, turned pale now like twilight, and wasted like wax in flame.

For a while — a long while — I thought it was only a woman, though a unique woman, who moved in might and grace before this multitude. By and by I recognized my mistake. Behold! I found upon her something neither of woman nor of man; in each of her eyes sat a devil. These evil forces bore her through the tragedy, kept up her feeble strength — she was but a frail creature;

and, as the action rose and the stir deepened, how wildly they shook her with their passions of the pit! They wrote "*Hell*" on her straight, haughty brow. They tuned her voice to the note of torment. They writhed her regal face to a demoniac mask. Hate and murder and madness incarnate she stood.

It was a marvellous sight! a mighty revelation. Suffering had struck that stage empress, and she stood before her audience neither yielding to, nor enduring, nor, in finite measure, resenting it; she stood locked in struggle, rigid in resistance. She stood, not dressed, but draped in pale antique folds, long and regular like sculpture. A background, and *entourage*, and flooring of deepest crimson threw her out, white like alabaster—like silver; rather, be it said, like death. Wicked, perhaps, she is; but also she is strong, and her strength has conquered beauty, has overcome grace, and bound both at her side, captives peerlessly fair, and docile as fair. Even in the uttermost frenzy of energy is each varied movement royally, imperially, exceedingly opheme. Her hair, flying loose in revel or war, is still an angel's hair, and glorious under a halo.

Fallen, insurgent, banished, she remembers the heaven where she rebelled. Heaven's light, following her exile, pierces its confines and discloses their forlorn remoteness. Vashti was not good, I was told, and I have said she did not look good: though a spirit, she was a spirit out of Tophet. Well, if so much unholy force can arise from below, may not an equal effluxe of sacred essence descend one day from above? The strong magnetism of genius drew my heart out of its wonted orbit; the sunflower turned from the south to a fierce light, not solar—a rushing, red, cometary light, hot on vision and to sensation. I had seen acting before, but never anything like this: never anything which astonished Hope and hushed Desire;

which outstripped Impulse and paled Conception; which, instead of merely irritating Imagination with the thought of what *might* be done, at the same time severing the nerves because it was *not* done, rushed power like a deep, swollen winter river, thundering in cataract, and bearing the soul, like a leaf, on the steep and stately sweep of its descent.

When it was all over, the prim little body — as instinct, under her plain, colorless exterior, with real passion and genius as the woman on whom she had looked — turned to her companion to seek his opinion. "He judged her as a woman, not an artist. It was a bramling judgment."

There are two letters of Rachel (published by M. Heylli), written shortly after this, which, perhaps, had she seen them, might have mitigated the judgment pronounced by the authoress of *Jane Eyre* against her wayward, passionate sister — for sisters these letters prove them to have been, in the sisterhood of suffering and of love. "My voyage begins auspiciously, that is to say, health and money are forthcoming. The heat is not too oppressive, so that I do not knock up so soon. My success is wonderful; but purchased at what a price? The price, alas! of my health and life. The intoxication of applause passes into my blood and burns it up. Do you think, after it is over, it is pleasant to

return home prosaically, take my cup of soup, and go to bed, with despair and misery gnawing at my heart? No, I can assure you it is not; but I am obliged to! The public, the world, see the artist, but they forget the woman."

She writes to her mother from Liége, after her visit to Holland, where the King and Queen had heaped civility and presents on her: "But all this has not brought joy, or even eaten into my heart. I am sad about many things, and a thousand times sad not to be with my dear little child. One day I shall see all those I love again, and perhaps the sincere and intense joy of that meeting will help me to forget the sorrows that pursue me since I left Paris. Write me a long letter about my little Alexandre and every one. Tell Papa, also, to keep a little corner for me in his immense property. I foresee that the wanderers will all return to the fold. I kiss you tenderly."

"*Heureusement qu'il reste à tout mortel une certaine dose d'espérance*," she says a little further on. Rachel had her *roses bleues*, like the rest of us. The one thing she sighed for all her life, and never obtained, was rest. To "return to the fold" and live quietly and calmly in the midst of her children and those she loved, was the illusion she cherished during all her wanderings over the face of the globe. To save a little

more money to make her children a little richer, to buy a larger house, or invest in a choicer property than the one she possessed — to surround herself and them with a little more luxury — this was the bright-hued bubble she pursued and seized, only to find it break in her hand, its brilliant colors disappearing with the health and strength that gave them consistency. In the whole history of art there is no tragedy sadder than this poor Rachel longing for the tranquil joys of life, but never attaining them, until her very aspiration became a stimulus to restlessness and greed, weeping and complaining that she led other people's lives, and yet staggering on to the bitter end, only borne along at last by the intoxication of applause and the love of gain.

CHAPTER XIII.

PHÈDRE.

"I WILL act Phèdre! They tell me I am too young, that I am too thin, and a thousand other absurdities. I answer, it is Racine's finest *rôle:* I am determined to act it!" Rachel spoke these words to Alfred de Musset on the 29th May, 1839. On the 24th January, 1843, the young actress appeared in this her greatest part. It was those three years that matured Rachel's powers. She would not have acted Phèdre so effectively in 1839 as in 1843. The scene with Hyppolyte in the fourth act was the outcry of her own quivering and betrayed heart.

A theatrical critic tell us that "tragic intensity is nothing more than the perfection of art," and to prove it he says that he remembers being behind the scenes in a theatre when Rachel was thrilling an audience before the curtain. When she came off she was perfectly cool and collected. "I asked her whether she really had felt what she had been portraying. Her reply was to parody the scene."

No doubt sometimes, when the flash of inspiration is absent, the greatest actor supplies its place with simulative art; it is impossible to expect him always to feel the passion he portrays with the same intensity; but he must have conceived at the beginning their effects, or he never could have conveyed their expression to his audience. The great danger, however, of trusting to art and not to true inspiration is that after a time the representation becomes rigid and cold: this was the determining cause of the deterioration in Rachel's genius towards the end of her career: the soul had gone out of her impersonations; instead of being instinct with life, they became hard and formal. She felt this herself when she said to her sister Sarah on her death-bed, "In studying, take my word for it, declamation and gesture are of little avail. You have to think, to weep."

These three years of suffering and obloquy were also three years of energetic and uninterrupted study. Amidst all the instability and excitable restlessness of her nature, Rachel had the persistence of purpose which is the test of true genius. Once she felt assured of her capacity to act a part, no influence deterred her from doing so — no exterior inducement was allowed to interfere with her calm determination to master the subject. Intense as was the emotion

she felt, she set about the work with mechanical steadiness, using the emotion as a tool to be made use of when needed.

This fragile young girl had an iron will when she wished to rise to the level of an exalted ideal. She was one of the most remarkable examples of natural genius that ever existed, but, at the same time, an example of how hard-working genius ever is. There was no hesitation, no faltering; the more difficult was the *rôle* of Phèdre, the more indefatigably she worked at it. Not one of the effects that delighted and electrified her audience but was studied and tried with the most astounding perseverance. She played Phèdre every evening for two years, and Jules Janin declared she always played it differently in certain scenes. It was only when she returned from St. Petersburg, in 1846, that she had reached the extreme perfection of conception and execution which placed her indisputably in the foremost rank of her profession. "I have studied my solos (in the fourth act of *Phèdre*)," she wrote to her old teacher, Samson. "I do not dare to boast for the second representation; but I am sure they are coming. Not having seen you behind the scenes, I will make a point of looking at you as I come on, and will soon see if you are pleased."

Those were the sobs which seemed to every one that heard them to proceed from the depths of some divine despair, as she exclaimed, "*Misérable et je vis!*"

Phèdre was incomparably Rachel's greatest inspiration. In it she touched heights that had never been touched before. This woman, devoured by unlawful passion, became, interpreted by her, so pathetic, so grand, that the audience were forced to attribute her wickedness and treachery, as did the ancient Greeks, to a curse of the gods, and not to her own wrong-doing.

Phèdre, the culminating point of French tragedy, has ever been looked on as a test play for all great actresses. The whole range of human feelings, love, fear, grief, jealousy, revenge, repentance, all that can move and excite an audience, are represented in three stages of development by one central figure; and yet, though a prey to all these passions, the daughter of Pasiphaé, both in Euripides' and Racine's tragedy, remains an elevated person, victim of the persecutions of Aphrodite. Being thus absolved from moral responsibility, she is likewise saved from moral obliquity. Racine seldom allows himself thus to adopt a Greek myth, and it is hardly necessary to show how enormously the complex idea of the interference of the gods increases the difficulty of giving an idea of the character to a modern

audience; for, although a woman in her weakness and her sin, Phèdre must be almost divine in her sorrow and her love. And it was from this point of view that Rachel so immeasurably surpassed all other actresses. Sarah Bernhardt, who in this *rôle* has most nearly approached her, is weak, unequal, passionate. We see all the viciousness of Phèdre, and none of her grandeur. She breaks herself to pieces against the huge difficulties of the conception, and does not succeed in moving us. In the second scene, where Phèdre, thinking her husband is dead, confesses her incestuous passion to the object of it, Sarah Bernhardt never rises above the level of an *Aventurière* or a *Frou-Frou*. Rachel was the mouthpiece of the gods; no longer a free agent, she poured forth every epithet of adoration that Aphrodite could suggest, clambering up higher and higher in the intensity of her emotion, whilst her audience hung breathless, riveted on every word, and only dared to burst forth in thunders of applause after she had vanished from their sight.

When Racine was blamed by Arnauld for departing from the simplicity of the ancient Greek fable by introducing the character of Aricie, he is said to have replied, "*Mais qu'auraient dit nos petits-maîtres?*" An interesting comparison might be made between the drama as understood by Racine and the drama as understood by

Euripides, typifying thereby the difference between the Frenchman and the Greek, to whom he is so fond of comparing himself. In restricting ourselves to a consideration of Rachel and her art, however, we have to thank the *petits-maitres* of Versailles for one of the grandest scenes in one of the actress's grandest parts. Here the modern as well as the ancient Phèdre awakens to the "full consciousness of her own divinity;" she feels she cannot escape the all-penetrating glance of her "celestial kinsfolk." The Sun, the Stars, Minos — the terrific judge of Hell — all see her guilt, and with her invocation to each in turn, the unhappy woman sinks on her knees imploring mercy, and gasping out the marvellous word, "*Pardonne!*" The climax was reached. Nothing was ever imagined more pathetic and heart-stirring than this speech as declaimed by Rachel.

The year she first appeared in *Phèdre* and the two years preceding it were, as we have said before, the happiest and best of Rachel's life. Devoted to her art for art's sake, not for the remuneration to be obtained, she lived in a *commerce plein de douceur avec les muses*, undisturbed by the indecorum and self-seeking of later years. Some of her letters written at this time show that the greed of gain and applause, with which her enemies charged her, had not

deadened her appreciation of the true aims and instincts of an artist. She wrote to Madame de Girardin, 6th February, 1843: —

MADAME, — I am suffering and tired, yet am obliged to play *Phèdre* to-morrow; I may have to act Friday also. The Comédie cries, "*Mirène*," and declares its salvation depends on me. But just now it is a great trouble to me, for I am obliged to refuse everything so as not to fail in my duty.

Rest assured, Madame, that, if it were not for this, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to accept your kind invitation. I regret still more my inability to go to you, as I lose the prospect not only of pleasant society, but also of listening to fine verses well declaimed, and I confess I have a weakness for both. I devote myself every day to *Judith*. I should like to repeat some portions at my house one Thursday. Let me know if you authorize me to do so. Should you have the least objection, do not scruple to say so.

On the 21st June of this year she wrote to Madame de Girardin from Marseilles: —

The Marseillais are charming. If their enthusiasm were a little less noisy I should be quite in love with them. They do not take out my horses, certainly, but they prevent my carriage from moving. It takes me an hour and a half to advance a hundred steps on my return home in the evening. The last time I acted, hoping to escape more easily on foot, I begged M. Méry to give me his arm. Hardly had we reached the door than we were recognized, and crushed, smothered, pushed by an increasing crowd. The eloquence of my companion was

unrivalled against the enthusiasm of the good Marseillais. We had to take refuge in a baker's shop, whose door was soon besieged. The Commissary of Police came to offer his assistance and the protection of about twenty soldiers. We, however, distrustfully rejected his suggestion, and, confident in the good nature of the crowd, we showed ourselves and begged them to let us pass. A thunder of applause was their only answer, and, amidst acclamations and expressions of good will, I made a triumphal entry into my hotel. Flattered as I felt, I was nearly dead with fatigue, and determined they should not catch me again.

Les Hernes has been the great success, the by-play being particularly admired. Seriously, I did not expect so much from the people of Marseilles. They show their affection, too, in a most substantial manner. The receipts have reached an unprecedented sum, — 8,200 francs. I am very proud, especially as they tell me those of Talma never exceeded 5,500. Certainly times have changed.

I cannot finish my letter without telling you of a piece of audacity which frightens me when I recall it in cold blood. In the middle of one of the most stirring scenes of *Bajazet*, some one took it into his head to throw me a wreath. I took no notice, wishing to keep in the part (*restée en situation*), while the audience shouted, "The wreath! the wreath!" Atalide, thinking more of the public than of her role, picked up the wreath and offered it to me. Indignant at the vandalism of the proceeding, worthy of an opera audience, I took the unlucky wreath, and, throwing it brusquely on one side, went on with Roxane. Fortune favors the brave. Never was there a stronger proof of this axiom. Three salvos of applause greeted this unpremeditated act.

To her mother she wrote: —

This is the sixth day of my stay at Marseilles, and I have not seen a street, except the one leading from the hôtel to the theatre, from the theatre to the hôtel. I will confess to you, however, that, although I arrived alone in this town, I have not been dull for a moment. Certainly nothing could have been more flattering than my reception. Mademoiselle Rose [her faithfully attached servant, who nursed and tended her on her death-bed] begs to be remembered to all of you. She finds the coffee in the south very bad, and is in despair. I do not complain, as everything is so cheap. On my return to Paris I will make you laugh by an account of the difficulty I had in finding a place to put up at. All the hotels, inns, *auberges*, wished to take possession of me. Each puffed his own place. One cried when I ventured to leave him; the other tore his hair; a third threatened to commit suicide, "because," as he said, "my hotel is the best, the largest, and I and my house will be dishonored if the greatest artist of France and Navarre does not stop with me." After much discussion, to clinch the matter, he at last said, "I will not ask you to pay anything." I was touched by this unexpected and sublime effort of despair, and I finished by doing a good action and accepting the offer of the one who was most unhappy and most anxious. Miserable man! Little did he recognize his position. The first day I nearly ate him out of house and home, and my companions wanted for nothing. In the middle of the night I was seized with indigestion. Providence punished me for my greed. I made up my mind next morning. I sent for the mistress of the hotel, and said to her, with one of my tragic looks, "Madame, after what has happened to-night, I can no longer remain

without payment in your hotel. I was tempted to eat too much. You must, therefore, spare some money. You will be permitted to take as little as possible."

We come to notes. My lodging, *salon*, bedroom, dressing-room, room for keeping my clothes, two servants' rooms, ten francs; very well. Dinner at home, four francs; perfect! Breakfast, one franc; delightful! Servants' keep for two, six francs. I have nothing to say. And that day I ate exactly what they gave me. I could not w[illegible] until my return to tell you this story, which I consider [illegible]; but, remember, if I have laid on my colors too thickly, it is to make you, papa, and the dear little ones laugh. Ah! I am tired of holding my pen; it will fall from my hands. Not wishing to make an ugly blot, I embrace you a thousand times.

This is not one of Rachel's most amusing letters; but we give it because it shows her happy in her work, proud of popularity honestly won, and full of confidence in the affection of those to whom she wrote. In the beginning of July she went on to Lyons, the city where her mother had kept an old-clothes shop, where her younger sister Rebecca was born, and where she and her sister Sarah had wandered about the streets singing, to try and obtain a few coppers from the charity of passers-by. "*Cette ville de Lyon que me rapelle toute mon enfance,*" as she wrote to her father. Now she was received with acclamations, treated like a queen, surrounded with every luxury that money and affection could procure for her.

That "sensibility" that Talma declared to be one of the principal requisites for a great actor was not — at this time certainly — absent from Rachel's heart. A story is told of her hearing of a Jewish family that was reduced to the lowest stages of want. Having ascertained all necessary details of the case, she repaired on the following day to the sixth floor of a house in one of the poorest quarters of the town. Here she found a workman, his wife, and six children, without bread, clothes, or shoes. The gift of 300 francs which the visitor had brought for their relief called forth a torrent of blessings and fervent thanks. Not content with this munificent donation, the young actress stopped at a shoemaker's on her way home and ordered eight pairs of shoes to be sent to them.

We must give in its entirety a very interesting letter written by the young tragedian to her brother Raphael. She places before us plainly enough what she considered the honorable views and aims of a dramatic student. Raphael, four years older than Rebecca, was born in 1825. He made his first appearance at the Odeon in November, 1843, at the same time as his younger sister. We can imagine how inexperienced he must have been, since Rachel, in the preceding month of July, does not know whether he has definitely decided on a theatrical career or not.

LYONS, 7th July, 1843.

MY DEAR LITTLE FIO RATHALL, — The motive which prevented you from writing to me sooner is too praiseworthy to allow me to be the least offended. I am not astonished at your sympathy for poor Victor, and now I regret sincerely that I did not listen to him when he described his position, which I could hardly believe to be so desperate; but now I am a little consoled since the clarity he required has come from the family. Thanks for him and thanks for myself.

Now, dear little brother, tell me what are your pursuits and intentions for the future; for you have no time to lose. You will soon be a man, and you ought to know that the frock does not make the monk (*que l'habit ne fait pas le moine*). If, as I presume, your vocation is for the theatre, try at least to elevate the art; make it a conscientious business of it, not to achieve a position, as a young girl out of a convent is married that she may be able to dance six times at a ball instead of three, but because you love it, and have a passion for those works that feed the mind and guide the heart aright. My dear little brother, you have just rendered so great a service to a young man that I must express my approbation by proffering advice to you.

A woman can achieve an honorable position without, perhaps, having that pollish the world fancy calls education. Why? you will ask. Because a woman does not lose any of her charm, but the contrary, by observing an extreme reserve of manner and demeanor. A woman answers questions, she does not ask them; she never opens a discussion, she listens. Her natural desire to please makes her wish to educate herself. She retains what she learns, and, without a solid foundation, she thus acquires that superficial culture which often passes for

real culture. But a man — what a difference! All that a woman cannot know is all-important to a man. By culture he increases his pleasures, diminishes his sufferings, varies his joys, and passes, besides, for *un homme d'esprit*. Meditate on this; and if at first it seems hard to you, remember that you have a sister who will be proud, happy in your success, a sister who will love you with all her heart. I hope this letter will not have wearied you; but that, on the contrary, you will sometimes employ your leisure time reading it. I embrace you tenderly.

This year, 1843, was the climax of Rachel's artistic career. By cultivating her love for "those works that feed the mind and guide the heart aright," she had climbed from height to height, — ever aspiring, ever striving, — until the ultimate goal was reached. The rest was but a descent, an anti-climax. Weary, broken down in health, she travelled over the world, computing her art only at its money value, while the brother whom she addressed in this elevated strain became nothing more nor less than his sister's showman during her disastrous tour in America.

Aided by her influence and his own handsome person, he appeared at the Comédie Française, three years later, in the *rôle* of Curiace in *Les Horaces*. He had no great talent, and soon gave up the stage, and became manager and organizer of theatrical tours abroad. In 1872 he undertook the direction of the Porte Saint Martin Theatre, and died in the same year when

on a journey to London. Poor Raphael! We wonder if he ever "employed his leisure time" reading his sister's letter, and meditating upon the way in which he and she had fallen away from the ideal of those early days.

Yet one or two more letters from this marvellous year, 1843, the last in which we shall see the actress indulging in that light-hearted fun which at the beginning of her career was one of her great attractions. On the 12th August she wrote from Interlaken to Madame Samson:—

DEAR MADAME SAMSON,—Your daughters have gone. You must be very lonely; perhaps a letter now me will cheer you up. I have need of a stimulus to write, for I am in a state of health that makes me unfit for anything. For the last month I have been suffering from internal inflammation. My appetite has disappeared, and with it my gayety and strength. I am at Interlaken, where I take baths of skimmed milk. I have benefited from them, I think, and begin to eat a little more. Unfortunately we leave this directly, to return by slow stages to Paris, and I am afraid that my irritation may begin again, and I may be obliged to go to bed as soon as I arrive. That would neither suit me nor the theatre. By remaining five or six days longer I, most likely, should have been perfectly well. But what would *Messieurs les Sociétaires* say if I were not home by the 25th? What conjectures, what statements, what gossip! I am determined, therefore, to start. I began my journey by Geneva, thence to Chamounix. I ascended from Montanvert to see the Mer de Glace. Imagine a stormy sea on the top of the mountains struck motionless by divine power. Nothing can be

imagined finer or more striking than this sight. Ill as I was, it enchanted me.

After the great drama comes the *vaudeville*. In the inn at the top of Montanvert a party of real Parisians, quite hot from the *passage de l'Opéra*, was stopping. A large man, probably a stockbroker, *habitué* of the Variétés or the Café Anglais; three young women, whose travelling dresses were copied with the greatest exactness from the *Journal des Modes*; and two young collegians, travelling evidently to finish their education. One of the ladies thought she recognized me. "How like Rachel she is!" "But it is Rachel herself!" answered one of the collegians. "I saw her quite lately in *Phèdre*. Her face has remained imprinted on my memory." "Come, come," answered the old *habitué* of the Café Anglais: "Rachel is not nearly as pretty as this charming person." I will spare you any more of the discussion, which, becoming heated, reached the point of either a free fight or a bet. The latter carried the day; but you will never guess the prize. A leg of mutton! The ingenious youth undertook to solve the mystery. We had left the inn, and, aided by the guides, we ventured, not without fear and trembling, on the *mer de glace*. Crossing a *crevasse*, I found myself face to face with the individual whom I had heard make the bet. He was slightly embarrassed at first; then, turning his head a little, he gave expression to the following sentiment: "Nature and art — all are admirable!" He had said to himself, "If it is Rachel, she will be flattered by the exquisite delicacy of this insinuating compliment, and will not be able to conceal her satisfaction." But, much more occupied with the slippery ground on which I stood than with the gentleman's flattering words, I passed calmly along. Upon which he turns to his party and cries out, "You see, it is not Rachel: I have gained my bet!" Not wishing, however, to be the innocent cause of so con-

siderable a loss as a leg of mutton, having returned to the inn before the Parisians. I wrote in my last letter, writing in the visitors-book, "This is a leg of mutton, sir. I am Rachel!" I kiss you, my dear Madame Samson, as I love you, — and that is with my whole heart.

This journey to Switzerland was one of the few undertaken by Rachel simply for amusement and repose. Already we see the cloud of ill-health on the horizon, that was destined to overshadow her life. She wrote to her father from Lyons on the 10th July: —

My dear Father. — I arrived here on the 5th. I was so fatigued with rehearsals and representations at Marseilles that I have only been able to act once in Lyons. To-day I give *Andromaque* for my second representation. I have had an acute pain in my back for the last ten days. Thinking it would pass away, I said nothing; but now I am painfully aware that it is becoming chronic. I felt it first of all after writing for some time; now I feel it continually, unless when lying down. The pain is on the left side, between the shoulders. I can carry nothing with the left arm without feeling the ache. Damp, I am sure, aggravates it. It has been continuously wet and cold since my arrival. My spirits are depressed; and, as you know, the view from the Hôtel du Nord is not calculated to make one cheerful. It is only when I find myself face to face with an approving public, like the one I meet here for the second time in this town of Lyons, which recalls all my childhood, that I forget my pain and suffering. When I think that I have still eleven representations to give I am frightened at the fatigue. I can only try to find at home the calm and repose each representation robs me

of. I make a great effort to write to you; for, as I told you, I suffer a great deal more when I write. Therefore, dear father, as what I have to do to-night is anything but repose, I leave you, hoping that you, mamma, and the children are well. A thousand kisses.

Your respectful daughter.

CHAPTER XIV.

"LA MARSEILLAISE."

THE manner in which Rachel sang, or rather chanted, the "Marseillaise" was, perhaps, a greater manifestation of her unprompted natural genius than any other part she essayed during her brilliant career.

After the Revolution of February, 1848, and the flight of royalty, mob law ruled unchecked. Every place of amusement was deserted; all excitement and interest concentrated on what was passing in the streets, where the people, wild with joy, set up trees of liberty, and shouted the "Marseillaise."

The idea of singing the national hymn first occurred to Rachel on one of these memorable days at the end of February. She lived near the Porte Maillot, and, in entering Paris, had to make her way through crowds declaiming it in every tone, and with every gesture of excitement and emotion. She then began to repeat it lowly to herself as she passed along, until the first idea took shape and form. M. Lockroy tells us: —

"One evening I was in Rachel's *loge*, when she suddenly said, 'I have dreamed of something extraordinary, which will draw all Paris. I will sing the "Marseillaise."' 'But I did not know you could sing.' 'No, but I can chant it (make a *melopée* of it). You shall come and hear it to-night, there will be only three or four of you present.' 'Then I am to announce that Mademoiselle Rachel will sing the "Marseillaise" at the Théâtre Français?' 'Certainly; don't you think it will bring in money, now that all the theatres are deserted?' 'That depends; I must hear it first.' In short, when the public performance of the evening was over, we assembled in the green-room. With her family collected around her, and the tricolor flag in her hand, she began the celebrated song, which she had previously studied verse by verse, note by note. All the world knows what she made of it! It was not singing, properly so called, but a recitation, in which the strength of accentuation and the power of expression supplied the want of melody. It made the hearers tremble and shudder. The success was as great as the conception was daring. The 'Marseillaise' brought in as much as three of Corneille's finest tragedies."

Rachel has been much blamed for pandering to the passions of the crowd by declaiming on

that stage, which until now had been almost exclusively reserved for the dramatic masterpieces of France, the chant of war of 1792. Jules Janin implored her, when she came to ask his advice, not to awaken the dangerous echo of bloodshed and violence. She represented the financial difficulties of the theatre, the impossibility of filling it in the present excited state of men's feelings. "I do not know," was the wise answer, "if the theatre needs the 'Marseillaise' to build up its failing fortunes; but you need neither the theatre nor the 'Marseillaise' to build up yours. Keep to *Camille* and *Cinna*, and don't set passions aflame which it may be beyond your power to control. Remember, also, all the benefits heaped on you at St. Petersburg, Brussels, Vienna, Turin, London. What will your royal patrons think of you if you incite to revolution and violence?"

His words were of no avail. She had made up her mind long before consulting her "oracle," and three days later, after a stormy and excited representation of *Lucrèce*, the tricolor flag was left, as it were by chance, lying on a bench in the Forum, in the last scene of the play. Rachel seized it, and, with one of those grand gestures of hers, holding it aloft, came on towards the footlights, chanting, low and fierce, "*Allons enfants de la patrie.*" The audience sat silent

and breathless, while this fate, this fury, this goddess of Liberty — for to them she represented all this — gave a new significance, a new meaning to every word and every line of the hymn: a perfect delirium of excitement fell upon the crowd, and, as the flag waved harmoniously round her, men felt capable of heroism and death "*Le jour de gloire*" had dawned for them and their country. Republicans fell sobbing into one another's arms; Royalists trembled and shivered before the great wave of Revolutionary exultation that swept around them.

"One felt in the air," said Madame Louise Collet to Beranger, "a mighty breath of hope, that bore along with it all youthful desires." That beautiful apparition, pale, menacing, was no longer a woman; she was the goddess of Liberty, calling her countrymen to arms.

The performance was repeated next day before thousands of spectators, for one of the new arrangements of the Radical director was the admittance of the mob to the Théâtre de la République, as the old Comédie Française was now re-christened.

One evening a member of the audience, an artisan, suggested that he and his fellow-workmen should subscribe for a bouquet to be presented to the *rude citoyenne*, Rachel Félix. A hat was sent round, into which each dropped

a few sous. Twenty francs was the result. Jacques Bonhomme rushed out, bought a handful of flowers at the flower-shop in the Palais Royale, and, returning, clambered over the orchestra and up to the stage to present his purchase. After this, every time she sang the "Marseillaise" a contribution was raised among the audience, and camellias, Cape jasmin, Persian lilies, Parma violets, were showered on her with as much profusion as though the audience had been the aristocracy of Paris.

George Sand has recorded her admiration of Rachel in the "Marseillaise," and declared it to be the only performance in which she ever cared to see her. "All artists competing for the Statue of Liberty," she says, "ought to go and study the classic poses of Mademoiselle Rachel singing the 'Marseillaise.' She is an exquisite incarnation of pride, courage, and energy."

There was an absence of intellectual sympathy between George Sand and Rachel — undoubtedly the two greatest female artists of their day — that strikes one at first as curious, but, on second consideration, becomes more intelligible. They were separated as widely as the poles in their views of art. George Sand was the head, almost the initiator, of the old oak and tapestry novel, while Rachel was severely classical. George Sand was the friend of Marie Dorval, the great

actress of the Romantic school. Rachel never cared for Madame Dorval, although she was an intimate friend of her husband Merle, "because," as she said, "in spite of his wife, he had always defended her, and criticised favorably her first efforts at the Théâtre Français." George Sand, like many other great artists, had the ambition to do what Nature had decreed she never could do — write a great play; and, we have no doubt, unconsciously the actress offended the authoress by showing a reluctance to appear in her compositions.

Only this year, 1848, a prologue, *Le Roi Attend*, from the great novelist's pen, was brought out at the Français; Molière was supposed to have fallen asleep, worn out with fatigue, over the half-written page of an improvised piece he was preparing for the recreation of Louis XIV. In his dream the Muse of Poetry (represented by Rachel), appeared to him, surrounded by Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Shakspeare, Voltaire, and Beaumarchais. They told the sleeping poet the influence they had had, and would have, on the human mind. Indulging in pompous and tiresome tirades, they informed him that dramatic poets prepared the freedom of nations; that what they sowed the people reaped, &c., &c. The clouds then closed, the vision disappeared, and the sleeping poet was

awakened by his faithful servant, who told him the King was waiting. Molière exclaimed, "What! are there yet kings?" Upon this witticism the curtain fell. It was only acted a few times. At one of the rehearsals the actress met George Sand smoking a cigar. She turned away with a stage aside, "What bad tobacco!" "and seemed inclined," as a looker-on said, "to call the firemen to put out the fire."

The Princess Belgiojoso once invited her to supper. "No," was the petulant answer, "I won't go; I should find George Sand smoking a cigar as big as my arm." She thought the great novelist's declamation pompous and artificial. A friend told her she ought to read her works, that she would find enough reality there.

"I dare say; but I would rather not," was the laughing reply.

"Why not?"

"Because I am afraid I should admire them."

There was, perhaps, a feeling of jealousy between the two women on the subject of the poet who had written the *Nuit de Mai* for the one and *La Servante du Roi* for the other.

One of the ideas of the Republican Government, as we have seen, in the Paris of 1848, was the free admission of the populace to the theatres. The Théâtre Français was paid for by the people, therefore it must be the first to throw

open its doors to admit them gratis. Citizen Lockroy and his colleagues decreed that the Théâtre Français had a great and noble mission to fulfil. It must rise to the greatness of the crisis. No longer must immoral and frivolous amusement be offered to a nation who, conscious of the greatness of its aspirations, wished to listen exclusively to the masterpieces of its immortal poets.

The following mandate of Ledru Rollin was therefore promulgated: —

> The Commissary of the Government of the Théâtre de la République is authorized to give National Performances at short intervals. Said performances to consist of works of the best French dramatic authors, acted by the best actors of the theatre. Between the acts National airs will be played. All the seats in the house will be numbered, and each seat will have a corresponding ticket. Said tickets will be distributed to the twelve municipalities of Paris, to the Hôtel de Ville, and to the Prefecture of Police, and thence to the clubs, schools, factories, workshops, and poorer citizens, who will obtain them by ballot. (Signed) LEDRU ROLLIN.
>
> PARIS, March 24, 1848.

The result of this patriotic endeavor was that the Français was perfectly empty on the second night of the *Représentations Nationales*, and would have been in as bad a plight as all the other theatres of Paris, had not Mademoiselle Rachel introduced the recitation of the "Marseillaise,"

for which the house filled towards the end of the evening. Ruin, indeed, was only averted by her strenuous exertions. The *sociétaires* expressed their gratitude in the following terms:

DEAR COMRADE,—You have double reason to feel proud and happy. Never has your success been so brilliant, never has it been so useful to the interests of our company. You have struggled for us with indefatigable devotion against the difficult circumstances which for the past two months have afflicted all artists. You have maintained the Maison de Molière in a more prosperous state than any other theatre.

We are proud to see in this, dear comrade, not so much the accomplishment of a duty as a proof of real sisterly friendship. Accept in return the unanimous thanks of your friends and colleagues. They hope this letter, signed by them all, will remain one of the most precious memories of your dramatic career; for if it is meritorious to obtain triumphs as brilliant as yours, it is no less flattering to have deserved the affection and gratitude of one's comrades.

THE ARTISTES SOCIÉTAIRES OF THE
THÉÂTRE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE.

In June Rachel went a tour, of which her brother Raphael was the organizer. Strasbourg, Metz, Besançon, Nancy, Dijon, Bâle, Geneva, Lausanne, Marseilles, Avignon, Toulon, Montpellier, Beziers, Cette, Orleans, Tours, Blois, Agen, &c., were visited in turn at, we need not say, what an immense exertion and fatigue. Her arrival was heralded two months beforehand

to all the directors of provincial theatres in a circular issued by order of the Minister of Interior, Ledru Rollin, which, to a certain extent, lent an official character to her movements:

Citizen Félix has assembled a company, with which he intends visiting various parts of France. It is his intention to have the masterpieces of our stage performed, the Citoyenne Rachel volunteering to be their interpreter. The Citoyenne Rachel has broken engagements to a large amount which she had abroad in order to remain in France! The devotion she has shown to the Republic in Paris, by her admirable creation of the "Marseillaise," she intends displaying in the Departments. The enthusiasm she has diffused here will doubtless produce also the most marvellous and salutary effect in our provinces. It is in the name of Art, over which the Republic intends extending its powerful and beneficial protection, that I request you will take into consideration the sacrifices she makes, and lend your assistance to facilitate the carrying out of her enterprise. *Salut et Fraternité.*

While at Montpellier, during this tour of 1848, Rachel visited Madame Lafarge, who was imprisoned in the Maison Centrale of that town. Marie Cappelle, *née* Lafarge, had been the heroine of the most singular drama of the century. Born in 1816, she was married by her guardians, in 1840, to a man whose acquaintance she had only made a few days before through an advertisement. Taken away to live in a lonely, tumble-down country house, in daily intercourse with this man, her indifference soon deepened

into dislike, which was increased by the morbid idea that he had misrepresented his circumstances and means, and by the uncompromising attitude of his mother, sister, and servants. Who is ever to tell whether she was guilty or not? The great Barrier himself said, talking of the case, "The older I grow the less I venture to decide on the innocence or culpability of a prisoner." The evidence was overwhelming, but, we must remember, given by people who were inimical to the young wife. It was proved she had bought arsenic; the servant deposed to seeing her pour a colorless fluid into her husband's food. When he was absent, it was declared, she had sent him poisoned cakes; and the first set of doctors called in after the exhumation of the corpse deposed to the detection of arsenic in the intestines of the deceased. The war between the two sides — the one who believed her innocent and the one who believed her guilty — raged fast and furious, converting the Court of Justice into a scene of violence and abuse, that was only possible amongst so excitable and passionate a people as the French. The party against her brought charges of offences committed before her marriage, declaring she had stolen some diamonds; they painted her character in the blackest colors, she was not given the benefit of any excuse for her crime; while the party in

her favor declared her to be an angel, surrounded by enemies, who were endeavoring to procure her condemnation to satisfy their own private animosity. Their excitement in her cause was fanned into fever-heat by the declaration of a second set of doctors that there was no arsenic to be detected in the body of the deceased. The result of the trial was that Marie Cappelle *veuve* Lafarge, was proved guilty and sentenced to imprisonment for life. It was during this imprisonment that she wrote her celebrated *Memoires*, in which she gives such a piteous account of her slow death by consumption.

The following letter of Rachel, describing her visit to the unfortunate woman, is very curious, showing the horror she felt at the sight of sufferings similar to those she was herself destined to undergo. It is addressed to her sister Sarah :—

I visited Madame Lafarge in her prison at the Maison Centrale yesterday. I had to obtain the consent of the *préfet* and of the prisoner herself, who dislikes very much receiving strangers. In my case, however, she declared herself enchanted, and said a great many complimentary things which I won't repeat. Léon Guillard accompanied me. She received us in the Director's room, prepared on purpose for the bishop's visits to the *afflictorum*. I was struck, not with her beauty, poor woman, for she is dying slowly of the most terrible of all diseases, consumption! She feels the skein of life's thread unwinding, and to the

very last moment she will feel, she will know. It is awful! Better a ball through the poor feeble chest, or that a chimney-pot would fall on her head in a gale.

As the room she received us in was gloomy and depressing, she led us into a smaller one next to it, where we three sat talking. I sat her looking attentively and closely at me. I dare say I blamed some of the emotion that I felt. I begged her to believe it was not idle curiosity that had brought me to see her. She interrupted me earnestly by saying that she set too good an opinion of my heart and intelligence for that. "I only saw you once," she said, "in *Polyeucte* or *Andre*. I have often regretted since that I did not know you personally." I then offered to come and recite anything she liked. She exclaimed with a sigh, "Ah! no, I do not dare. You would make me regret the world too much, and I am trying to teach myself not to regret life." When we left she kissed me.

Now, if you wish for my opinion of this celebrated prisoner, I will tell you that she strikes me as being a woman of considerable intelligence, who in any society would make her mark, if not by her moral qualities, certainly by her opinions and manner of expressing them.

She asked me if I knew M. Lachaud, the lawyer who conducted her case. I answered that I had only seen him once. "I advise you to make his acquaintance," she said warmly. "He has a good heart, and great talent and eloquence." I left sad and depressed, thinking that, if I had a favor to obtain from a sovereign, it would be the release of this poor creature — married by means of an agency — who is dying slowly and surely of remorse, or by the injustice of men.[1]

[1] She was released three years later by the President of the Republic, but only enjoyed her freedom for a few months.

Madame Lafarge's words shortly before her death might have been spoken by Rachel. "*Adieu tout ce que j'aime! Je lègue ma mémoire aux hommes de cœur. Mon pardon à mes ennemis. Qu'on me laisse seule avec Dieu.*"

The history of Rachel's tours in the provinces and abroad would fill a volume in themselves. The fatigue this fragile, delicate creature underwent in the pursuit of that fortune which she was heaping up — for we are afraid to no higher motive can we ascribe her continual restlessness — appears incredible. In a curious letter, addressed to Dr. Veron on the 26th May, 1849, she gave a list of the representations that she intended to give from the 29th May to the 31st August of that year, and its citation will enable us to form a better idea than would any general sketch of the labors which, to the utter destruction of her health, she imposed upon herself: —

I am very sorry to have been unable to make you my adieux this morning. A rehearsal of *Iphigenia* obliges me to be at the theatre at eleven. This is my itinerary:

Orleans . . .	May 29th, 31st.
Tours	June 1st, 2d.
Poitiers . . .	" 3d, 4th.
Niort . . .	" 5th.
La Rochelle . .	" 6th, 8th.

Rochefort . .	June	7th, 9th.
Saintes . . .	"	10th, 12th.
Cognac . . .	"	11th, 13th.
Angoulême . .	"	14th, 15th, 17th, 18th.
Périgueux . .	"	19th, 20th.
Libourne . . .	"	22d, 23d.
Mont-de-Marsan	"	25th.
Bayonne . . .	"	26th, 27th, 29th, 30th.
Pau	July	1st, 2d.
Tarbes . . .	"	3d, 4th.
Bagnères . . .	"	5th.
Auch	"	7th, 8th.
Toulouse . .	"	10th, 11th, 13th, 14th.
Narbonne . .	"	16th.
Perpignan . .	"	17th, 18th, 20th, 21st.
Carcassonne .	"	23d, 24th.
Cahors . . .	"	26th, 27th.
Aurillac . . .	"	29th, 30th.
Clermont . .	August	1st, 2d.
Moulins . . .	"	3d, 4th.
Nevers . . .	"	5th.
Bourges . . .	"	6th.
Blois	"	8th, 9th.
Le Mans . .	"	10th, 11th.
Laval	"	12th.
Rennes . . .	"	13th, 14th.
St. Malo . . .	"	15th.
Jersey . . .	"	17th, 19th, 21st.
Caen	"	18th, 20th.
Guernsey . .	"	25th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 31st.

To the above list may be added performances given in Bordeaux and one or two other places, for which she had not signed the agreement when it was written. Altogether they number eighty-five in ninety successive days.

In those days a provincial tour was much more lucrative than now. Few of the inhabitants of country towns were able to afford a journey to the capital, and only knew by hearsay of the genius of a Talma or a Rachel, until the thought occurred to enterprising country managers to induce, by payment of large sums, those theatrical stars to visit the various towns of the departments. Mars and Talma could not endure these journeys far from their beloved Paris. "I am only a rustic Celimène in the provinces," the former used to declare; whilst Talma averred, "I feel like a contraband hero; my royal robes are but a farmer's coat, my sceptre but a black-thorn stick, my imperial crown adorns my bent and unimpassioned head like an old gray hat fit to scare the birds at fruit-time."

The spirit of wandering was, however, born in Rachel. She never felt the depressing effects of an uncultured audience, and her genius never suffered from the deteriorating effects of acting to them. It seemed to soar above and beyond all exterior influences. As soon as she appeared, the sense of grandeur was imparted to the piece; although acted on a tumble-down country stage, with no scenery, and miserable adjuncts, the impression of stately colonnades and luxurious Eastern palaces was produced on the mind of the

listener. Abroad, when acting not even in the language of her audience, her pantomimic power was so great that she asserted her influence over them directly, never degrading her art to their level, but raising them to hers.

These wanderings, however, through the provinces and all over Europe, laid the seeds in her already overtaxed constitution of that disease which in America burst forth at last, consuming what little strength she had left. She travelled in a carriage of her own, which was fitted up after the manner of a stage-coach; the *coupé* was occupied by Rachel herself, and here she had a bed set up for her numerous night journeys. It would have been impossible for her to fulfil all the numerous engagements she undertook without travelling by night, but the most ridiculous stories were circulated in Paris respecting these journeyings. At Dragnignau, it was said, Fleuret, who played the part of Theseus, worn-out with fatigue, fell asleep while listening to the celebrated narrative of his son's death. A vigorous kick was required to rouse him in time to exclaim, "*O mon fils! cher espoir que je me suis ravi!*"

Only the most severe indisposition was accepted as an excuse for exemption from service. On one occasion, a member of the company was obliged to apply the leeches, which had been

prescribed for some temporary ailment, in the coach as they went along, it being considered impossible to give him a day's respite from duty.

At Bourges, Mademoiselle Durey, the *second lady*, was taken so ill that Rose, Rachel's maid, was sent back with her to Blois in the *coupé*. *Phèdre*, however, was announced for that night, and Rachel, not wishing to disappoint the audience, attempted to act it without an Aricie. Hippolyte, forgetting the absence of his bride, addressed the ardent expressions of love, meant for her, to space. The audience, provincial though they were, did not fail to recognize the comicality of the situation, and greeted his fits of oblivion with roars of laughter. What still further increased the hilarity was the behavior of the actor (a very inferior one) who played Theramènes. Being hissed in the account of Hippolyte's death, he advanced to the footlights, and said, with an apologetic shrug of the shoulders, "*Ma foi*, gentlemen, you are quite right. Nothing could be worse than the manner in which I gave it: but never mind, I'll begin it all over again." Needless to say that this sally was greeted with frantic applause, in which even Phèdre, who was waiting in the slips, joined heartily.

Sometimes, in the smaller country towns, the buildings, selected hastily by her brother Raphaël

or M. Prot, organizer of some of her tours, were not suitable for the purpose, and amusing incidents occurred in consequence. One night, at Saintes, everything was ready for the performance, actors dressed, scenery prepared; the only thing wanting was an audience. Not a soul came. The tumble-down building had been propped up by various ingenious means; but the townsfolk knew what had been done, and would not expose themselves to the risk of being buried beneath the ruins. The company got to bed in good time that night, but had to do double duty next day in another theatre, as there was an afternoon and evening performance to make up for lost time.

Meantime, the party inimical to Rachel at the Comédie Française took advantage of her absence to combine against her and undermine her overwhelming influence. As far back as the year 1846 Rachel had threatened to resign her position as Associate, finding that the duties of the position did not leave her sufficient liberty for her provincial and foreign tours. The members of the Comédie Française form a commercial body. The amount of popularity enjoyed by each actor or actress constitutes the capital which each subscribes, and, according to the valuation put upon it, each is entitled to what is called a half, a quarter, an eighth, three

quarters of a share, or a full share, in the profits of the theatre, which are divided into twenty-four shares. The holders of these shares, *Comédiens Sociétaires*, not being sufficiently numerous for the requirements of the theatre, engage what are called *pensionnaires*. The *pensionnaires'* salaries are paid by the *sociétaires*, and diminish, therefore, the profits they receive. The company is governed by a committee, composed of six male members. All the *sociétaires*, both male and female, however, have a voice in the acceptance or rejection of plays, which are read in full conclave. "In the multitude of counsellors," under those circumstances, there seems to have been little "wisdom," if we are to judge by the plays accepted during Rachel's tenure of office.

By "the Decree of Moscow" (so called because it was signed by Napoleon I. at Moscow on the 15th October, 1815), the Committee of Management were confirmed in all their privileges, the free action of the company in all financial and artistic affairs being only subject to the interference or remonstrance, when necessary, of the Court Superintendent and Imperial Commissioner. The actors, therefore, had complete control of their own affairs, and community of interest, one might have thought, would have bound them together. Far from it, however;

professional jealousy was too strong, and the Maison de Molière was a house continually divided against itself. Mademoiselle Mars, cold, calm, and self-interested, had for years imposed her sovereign will upon them, and now Rachel, grasping, passionate, and imperious, was twenty times worse. In 1847 the position became strained past bearing. The *sociétaires* saw that she was capricious, ungrateful, unscrupulous, extortionate, that she was always endeavoring to escape from her obligations to her comrades, and to do as little as she possibly could in return for the large salary she received. Under pretence of ill-health, they urged, "she was continually hurrying away and obtaining great rewards by her performances in the provinces." Indeed, during her *congé* of three or four months every year, she earned as much, they declared, as 30,000 francs. All this was substantially true, especially towards the latter years of Rachel's professional career in Paris. She was one of those natures who can do generous and unselfish things by impulse; but when fidelity to existing engagements, or obedience to the every-day calls of duty, is demanded of them, they avoid compliance by every means in their power.

Védel, favorable as a rule to the great tragedian, gives the following account of her connection with the Comédie: —

On the 1st April, 1842, Rachel consented to become an Associate: but in 1849 she made a pretext of her delicate health, and, bringing her case into court, caused the contract that bound her to the Comedie to be legally broken. The fact is, that as an Associate she found she was not free enough to prosecute her provincial and foreign tours. She preferred, therefore, the position of *pensionnaire*, and the theatre was obliged to accede to her request. She was then re-engaged simply as a *pensionnaire*, with a salary of 42,000 francs, and six months' holiday. Two years later a new caprice! She took it into her head to become a member again: the company consented, and Rachel became once more, in 1851, a *sociétaire*. The fact is, Rachel reigned a despotic sovereign in the Rue Richelieu, the actors blindly submitting to her slightest wish, even when against their own interests.

Védel then shows that her comrades' arguments were justified by the event. Large as were the proceeds when she acted, the annual profits of the theatre were not considerably increased. Every one crowded to see her, and no other representation had the least attraction, so that what was gained one day was lost the next. She had become, as it were, the pivot on which the Comedie Française revolved; during her *congés*, her regular and irregular absences, her sulks and caprices when she would not act, it was impossible to keep up the receipts. From this point of view, Rachel's reign was rather unlucky than prosperous, so far as the theatre was concerned. The profits of the first year she appeared were

relatively enormous. In 1838 she only gave six weeks of representations (exactly forty-eight evenings), which produced 17[illegible],822 francs, whilst the total profits of the year were 715,000 francs, showing that, over and above Rachel's performances, the Comédie had only realized, during ten months and a half, 544,178 francs. These large proceeds, too, only lasted for the first few years; as soon as the great interest and curiosity the young actress excited had been satisfied, the public ceased to flock in the same crowds. In 1846 the Comédie only realized 425,591 francs (Rachel acting sixty-five times); in 1847 only 331,144 francs (fifty-eight performances of Rachel). The receipts increased again slightly in 1850, the year of *Angelo* and *Horace and Lydie*. Then the enthusiasm of the first few years began to decline. Rachel's later representations never yielded the brilliant results of 1838 and 1839. But, as Vedel says, "Of what importance are financial results weighed in the balance with the glory and honor she brought to the Français? She far surpassed Georges, Duchesnois, Adrienne Lecouvreur; and since her death, in 1858, many attempts have been made to revive our ancient tragedies, but without success."

To return, however, to Rachel's dispute with the *sociétaires* in 1848, the year at the beginning of which they had expressed themselves so grate-

ful to their "*chère camarade*." In 1846 she had declared herself in favor of a dictatorship, instead of the rule of the Committee of six men, all actuated by different motives and interests. Greatly owing to her influence, M. Buloz, editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, was nominated sole director. Things went better under the new *régime*, but, in 1848, Buloz, by an act of political jobbery, was deprived of his functions, and Rachel lent all her influence to the election of M. Lockroy. His national performances, however, and his permitting the singing of the "Marseillaise," were made as much a matter of reproach after 1848 as Buloz's constitutional tendencies had been before; and, during Rachel's absence in the south of France, he was deposed. His dismissal annoyed her exceedingly, and she sent in her resignation, informing her dear comrades that she found herself under the necessity of retiring from the Théâtre Français, as the restoration of her health and the preservation of her dignity depended on her doing so.

Hardly was the resignation sent in before it was withdrawn, owing, in a great measure, to Janin's influence. He wrote to her on the 30th July, 1849:—

How happy and proud I am, my dear child, that my influence has been of some avail in keeping you at the Théâtre Français, whose ruin was decreed the day you

left it. It is no use; there is but one Rachel; she reigns absolute sovereign, and we must all submit. Remember that your life and your book are your land proud of the country. It would be a matter of eternal regret if you gave up those evenings, that audience entranced by your representation, the distinguishing applause, the tender appreciation of poets and critics. He who has once tasted that inebriating draught can never do without it. I, your critic, am but an artist in a small way: I only address a small audience; but I would sooner die than give up my Monday every week, so much delight do I take in telling my readers what my head has thought and my heart has felt. Come back as quickly as you can, and take possession of your kingdom again. You will be received with well merited applause, for you will have proved once more that the great artist is superior to the most legitimate cause of complaint. Alas! while you are leaving Brussels I am leaving Paris. Hardly shall we be able to exchange a word in passing. A clasp of the hand is not enough for friends such as you and I. Each day we have known one another has tightened the bonds that bind us together, increased our esteem, and justified our tender affection. I embrace you with all my heart.

A few months later she again resigned, and this time, to all appearance, definitely. Rachel explained her reasons to Madame de Girardin in a long letter, from which we give some extracts. It is dated the 14th October, 1849: —

MADAME, — Before bidding adieu to the Comédie Française, I wished to go over all my repertory once more, so as, in some measure, to pay the debt of gratitude I

owe those authors to whom a great portion of my success is due. Amongst others, I wished to give *Chapître*. Beauvallet's indisposition frustrated my intention. You see, Madame, I have again been unfortunate, not ungrateful. I wish you to know this, so that no untrue account of the affair may reach you, and deprive me of that kindness and friendship with which you have always treated me. Ah! I wish I could thus easily rebut all the unkind insinuations that are being made by the public on the subject of my resignation. I would then feel strong in my resolve; for that public, which has encouraged me from the beginning and made me what I am, would then know that I still merit its esteem, and would shield me with its all-powerful protection.

First of all, it was said that my withdrawal was the result of caprice; then that the object I wanted to attain was to drag money concessions from my comrades. In other words, they accused me of saying to them, "Your money or your life!" On the contrary, I was willing to make considerable pecuniary sacrifices if they would consent to give the reins of government into competent and able hands. Who can doubt my sincerity, when, after the Revolution of February, the day after the installation of a director, elected unanimously by our votes, and confirmed in his position by the Ministry, I offered to forfeit, if it were necessary to insure the services of competent *pensionnaires*, ten thousand francs of my income, and the whole of my *congé* of 1849? You must remember that my personal interests are bound up in those of the theatre. Its prosperity is as important to me as my own. This is why, as soon as the Ministry had selected a director [Lockroy] who was popular with all of us, I made it my duty to contribute as much as possible to the success of the new administration.

It was at that time difficult to drag the public from their political preoccupation. Did I not act four times a week? and did I not sing the "Marseillaise" — doing it all in the service of the Comédie? Whether my efforts were successful I will leave you to judge. I went on my way, happy at the results attained, and at the gratitude of my comrades.

Little did I foresee that, in the month of June, the zeal I had displayed would have been looked on as excessive, and would be used as an argument against me. At the end of June the Minister of the Interior addressed observations of such a character to the Government nominee that he immediately sent in his resignation. From these observations it was to be gathered that the interests of the Comédie were sacrificed to mine, and that it exercised an unfortunate influence on the theatre.

I defy any one to bring forward the smallest proof of the truth of the first statement. As to the second, I do not even reply, both on account of the respect I owe to the man by whom we had the honor of being governed, and for the respect I owe to myself. My devotion has thus, you see, been the cause of the dismissal of our director. I might have deplored this in silence, had not his resignation revealed the extent of the evil wrought by my zeal. In presence of this fact, of which I was involuntarily the cause, I did not think it possible to remain any longer a member of the Théâtre Français. This is the reason of my retirement. . . .

Let me say, also, that I am not the only member of the company who laments the inconveniences and vices of self-government. Every one of them knows it is no longer feasible. We are all unanimous in the wish to see the power concentrated in the hands of a director, who would give to our administration the strength it needs,

and would guarantee to each actor the freedom and repose so much needed for the exercise of his art.

I have waited nearly a whole year for this happy solution. The term fixed for my withdrawal has come. It is not without profound regret, Madame, that I take leave of this stage which recalls so many happy memories. They say I intend to seek for success far from France. They are mistaken. Where should I find a public like the one I leave? The recovery of its kindness to me, of its indulgence, its appreciation, will not be effaced so easily. I will add one word more: applause is a necessity of my life. I gave my last representation at the Rue de Richelieu yesterday: but I shall look forward to appearing on the little theatre you propose to build in your garden. A thousand thanks, Madame, for having taken the trouble to read my long and tiresome letter.

As we have seen, Rachel resigned on the 14th October; on the 20th she wrote again to Madame de Girardin. We give the first part of it in French, for it is in Rachel's best style:—

Vous qui m'avez vue verser un torrent de larmes au récit des petites misères de nos coulisses, vous comprendrez ma fuite de la capitale si vous n'en approuvez pas la résolution. Depuis quatre jours la fièvre me gagnait, et Paris allait me rendre folle, lorsque je me déterminai à aller abriter mon imagination déjà quelque peu en délire à la campagne verte encore, et dorée parfois d'un soleil tiède. Me voilà donc partie et installée dans une modeste petite chambre d'auberge. Mais loin d'éloigner de mon cœur et de ma tête ces colonnes plus ou moins antiques, ces portiques plus chinois que romains si salement reproduits sur le triste toile de nos coulisses, j'y pense

sans cesse et je demande en vain à mes chanteurs d'Ionie de calmer l'impatience que j'ai de rentrer brillante et riche des amours d'Antoine et de Xipharès.

She goes on to express with what joy she has heard of the possible appointment of Merle, husband of Madame Dorval, to the Directorate:

I would re-enter the Comédie Française willingly then, for now I feel like an exile, banished from all the applause and brightness of life. I implore you, Madame, to use your influence for M. Merle. I will work very hard to make his winter a success. I am going over my repertory now, and am studying *Marion Delorme*, Alfred de Vigney's *Dandamona*, and *Mademoiselle de Belle Isle*.

Arsène Houssaye and not Merle was nominated by the Ministry. As soon as Rachel heard of it, she wrote the following letter to the new Director: "Come at once and dine with me; I have a piece of bad news for you. I did my best, or, rather, my worst. You are appointed, in spite of me."

It was said that Josephine in the heyday of her youth and beauty ruled Europe: for there was little doubt Napoleon ruled Europe, and she ruled Napoleon. Lockroy, Buloz, Arsène Houssaye, were all supposed to direct the Théâtre Français; but each in turn fell beneath the sway of the siren, so that, in reality, its affairs were in the hands of "the first lady." By the actress's indignant protest, in her letter to

Madame de Girardin, we see that the Ministry had come to this conclusion in the case of citizen Lockroy. It was of little avail protesting, however; for soon it began to be whispered that, not only were the Directors, each in succession, subject to her influence, but that the Prince President himself bowed beneath her power, and accepted what terms she chose to dictate. The other members of the company, especially the female ones, might resent the despotism, enlightened though it were; none ever dared controvert Louis XIV.'s statement, "*L'état c'est moi*," or Rachel's, "*Il n'y a que moi seule*," and her lightest whims and caprices were accepted with as good grace as possible.

Alas! the day of reckoning came, when the suppressed hatred and envy excited by those years of triumph broke forth, and the dethroned sovereign, weak and unprotected, lay at the feet of her enemies. Then it was they gathered like a pack of wolves, and tore her reputation, moral and artistic, to pieces.

CHAPTER XV.

ZENITH.

RACHEL's great reputation was made in five or six *rôles* of the ancient classic drama of France. She created thirteen modern *rôles* in the course of her theatrical career, and undertook six modern *rôles* that had already been acted by others: *Frédégonde*, *Jeanne d'Arc*, *Lucrèce*, *Mademoiselle de Belle Isle*, *Angelo*, *Louise de Lignerolles*. Of the thirteen written expressly for her, *Adrienne Lecouvreur* alone has kept the stage.

From the pen of Madame de Girardin, Rachel made the great mistake of accepting three plays: *Judith*, *Cléopâtre*, and *Lady Tartufe*. While the young actress ruled the dramatic world of Paris, Madame Émile de Girardin, daughter of Sophie Gay, ruled the social and literary one. Napoleon I., who detested clever women, once met Sophie Gay in the drawing-room of the Princess Borghese. "Has my sister told you I detest *les femmes d'esprit?*" "Yes, Sire," was the ready answer; "but I did not believe her." The Emperor, annoyed at her *aplomb*, deter-

mined to disconcert her, and added insolently, "*Vous écrivez-vous? Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait depuis que vous êtes dans ce pays-ci?*" "*Trois enfants, Sire.*" The Emperor, who expected a list of her literary works, smiled and passed on. Madame Émile de Girardin, worthy daughter of her witty mother, was one of these children. Clever and fascinating, what wonder that her drawing-room in the coquettish hôtel of the Rue Chaillot was looked upon as the centre of all that was brilliant and cultured in the Paris of her day. "*Est-elle heureuse cette Madame Gay?*" a fashionable lady once said. "*Elle fait tout bien, les enfants, les livres, et les confitures;*"—and certainly Madame de Girardin was a daughter of whom any mother might have been proud, with her genius and her beauty. She, however, could not boast the versatility of her mother, as she had no children, and, in spite of frequent attempts, never wrote either a good drama or a good novel. Her tragedy of *Judith*, read by the lovely hostess, with her melodious voice and inspired manner, in her own drawing-room, received the approbation of half the eminent poets and literary men of Paris, but was a complete failure before the calm impartial audience of the Théâtre Français. The subject was a disagreeable one, and even Rachel's grace and beauty was insufficient to infuse any vitality into "that

Judas kiss in three acts," as Janin designated the play in his *feuilleton*.

One of those incidents, also, which often have sufficed to seal the fate of a better drama than *Judith*, took place the first night. At the most pathetic moment, in the opening scene, when the Hebrews were praying to Heaven to help them in their distress, a small gray cat crossed the stage. The audience broke into peals of laughter, and, in spite of the all-powerful presence of Rachel, it was impossible to restrain the merriment, which infected the actors and actresses themselves. The next dramatic attempt of Madame de Girardin was *Cléopâtre*; but not all the efforts of the Rue de Chaillot clique were sufficient to breathe a temporary vitality into its high-sounding artificial verses. Rachel wrote to Madame de Girardin on the 13th December, 1847:—

No, I am not actually ill, but, unfortunately, not as strong as I could wish. It is not true that I do not intend to act any more: but, as I cannot act what I would like to, I would rather leave the stage than appear in any other *rôle* than *Cléopâtre*: and I am sure, dear Madame de Girardin, you do not doubt my word when I tell you that I have not energy enough to give your fine *rôle* as it ought to be given. As to all the small intrigues of the theatre, you and I (permit me to associate my name with yours) ought to place ourselves far above them. Do not write to M. Buloz, and, perhaps, in time we may be able to

prove to the public that a really beautiful and fine work can always triumph over the small intrigues that seek to drag it down.

Thus *Cléopâtre* was abandoned after fourteen representations.

In spite of these repeated failures, Rachel accepted another piece from Madame de Girardin, and appeared in the part of Lady Tartufie at the Français on the 14th February, 1853. The authoress of *La Joie fait peur* had found a more fitting field for her talent in this drama, representing the social life of the day, than in her endeavor to treat tragic subjects. Rachel never liked the part, although she is said to have been better in it than in any other attempted by her in modern drama. The *rôle* of the Duke d'Estigny was played by her old teacher Samson, and "their perfect understanding, long habit of studying together, and knowledge of each other's powers, produced," we are told, "a result nearly amounting to perfection." The first night, the capricious young actress acted it so coldly that Madame de Girardin could hardly bring herself to be civil to her.

"She has played wretchedly! she will destroy the piece!" exclaimed the indignant authoress, in her box; but when face to face with the actress, on whom she knew depended all the future of her piece, the diplomatic woman of

the world merely said. "*N'importe;* with you I shall hope even yet to succeed."

Rachel acted Lady Tartuffe in England. "She was graceful, ladylike, and diabolical," Mr. Lewes tells us: but that the play had no merit beyond what Rachel gave it was made apparent when it was revived at the Comédie Française in 1857. In spite of Madame Plessy's refined and charming talent, it only ran for six nights. Rachel appeared in it thirty-five times.

There is a curious analogy between the story of Adrienne and the story of Rachel. A poor straw-plaiter came from the depths of La Champagne to Paris to make bread to fill his own and his children's mouths. His young daughter watched with eager awe, from the window of their wretched lodging opposite the Théâtre Français, the exits and entrances of the actors and actresses, and at last herself essayed her powers, with some young companions, on an amateur stage at a grocer's shop in the Rue Férou. The rehearsals excited considerable curiosity in the neighborhood, and were honored by the presence of several persons of distinction. Above all, the audience were delighted with the talent of the girl Adrienne, who to the most favorable personal gifts united originality, deep feeling, and a voice capable of expressing every gradation of emotion. She soon rose to the top

of her profession, and accompanied by her father, who encouraged and cultivated her taste by his judicious advice, she spent some years acting in the country towns of France, finally obtaining an engagement at the Théâtre Français. For years the beautiful actress kept the Parisian public at her feet, counting among her adorers Voltaire and Maurice de Saxe. The love of the latter, which was fully reciprocated, cost the unfortunate young actress, it is said, her life. One of the beauties of the day, the Duchess de Bouillon, jealous of Maurice's love, as the story goes, sent Adrienne a poisoned bouquet. Death came to her at the moment that happiness seemed within her grasp, for Maurice had that day promised to make her his wife. "*Vous qui m'aimez tant, sauvez-moi, secourez-moi . . . je ne veux pas mourir! À present je ne veux pas mourir.*" It was of no avail, however; young, beautiful, and beloved, Adrienne was torn from life, and from those who loved her. Voltaire celebrated her memory in one of the finest elegies ever written, and Maurice de Saxe died with her talisman on his heart at Fontenoy. Out of such elements one of the finest modern dramas has been evolved, and, after the first hesitation, Rachel appreciated the pathos and interest of the part, and identified herself with it as no actress since has been able to do. "What! you

are not dead?" said a friend to her one evening, as she came off the stage laden with crowns and flowers. "You have stolen those flowers from your own tomb." His words bore a strange significance; for Rachel acted Adrienne when struck to death at Charleston, the last time she ever appeared on any stage.

In the spring of 1840, in the midst of political convulsions and popular excitement, Rachel first appeared in *Le Moineau de Lesbie*, a dramatic idyl in one act. Reputations are sometimes made by the merest accident. Armand Barthet is an example of this. No one in France read the *Moineau de Lesbie*, but every one knew it and its author. He was a young student-at-law, who lived beyond the Seine, attended the balls at the Chaumière, and thought himself a poet. He wrote sonnets, madrigals, and, having finished a drama, went with it to the Théâtre Français. Such hardihood was unheard of; he was even rebuffed by the door-keeper. At the Odéon he fared no better. The young author sighed, threw his MS. in a drawer, and thought no more of conquering a place upon the boards of Paris. In due season he took his degree, lived modestly, and, in the autumn seasons, was wont to relieve his vacation with shooting expeditions near his native town of Besançon. He had not, however, entirely laid aside his pen,

and delighted the provincials from time to time with a sentimental romance, in the columns of the *Impartial*, the chief journal of Besançon. One week he changed his programme, and, with apologies for the omission, sent to the provincial editor a little drama which he had written years before, and which he trusted was not wholly without merit.

This little drama was the rejected one of the *Moineau de Lesbie*. Emboldened by seeing himself in print, Barthet carried with him a copy of the *Impartial* to Paris. When there he ventured to enclose it, with "the hope it might have perusal," to the veteran *feuilletonist*, Jules Janin. For weeks he heard nothing of it; but one day the *Journal des Débats* and Jules Janin made him famous. The critic congratulated him upon his success; he urged him personally to present it to the Director of the Théâtre Français. Barthet was doubtful. "We are your sponsors," said Janin. It was presented, received unanimously, and Rachel played Lesbie. Never had she been so enchanting or so fascinating, — "*suis-je belle?*" as she says in the first scene, when she looks at herself decked out in her rival's jewels. After the representation of the *Moineau de Lesbie*, the public was obliged to confess that Rachel was not only a great actress but a graceful and beautiful woman.

She knew this, and always loved *le petit Moi même*. The plot was of the slightest. Catullus, the Latin poet, about to be married, intended renouncing all the joys of his youth, including the beautiful Lesbia, who till now had reigned absolute mistress of his heart. He invited the friends of his bachelorhood to a banquet to celebrate his change of state. While they were taunting him with the liberty he was giving up, a message came from Sexta, the bride-elect. She had dreamed a dream of ill omen, and wanted to see her betrothed, to receive the assurance from his lips that it was of no significance. He obeyed the summons, as in duty bound, and during his absence Lesbia, unconscious as yet of her lover's disloyalty, entered. She was dressed in a soft, clinging drapery, held at the waist by a gold belt; a myrtle crown encircled her small Greek head, while her dark brown hair fell in long coils down her back. In the midst of the story she related of the death of the bird, pet and plaything of their happier days, her lover returned, and she recalled to his memory how, in the calends of the April of the year before, they had found it fallen out of its nest: —

Et comme il voletait de mon doigt sur le tien,
Tu t'approchais de moi toujours plus près, — si bien
Qu'au bout de peu d'instants je sentis ton haleine,

Courir comme du feu dans les fleurs de verveine,
Qui couronnaient ma tête, et que bientôt ma main,
Tressaillit de plaisir sous tes baisers sans frein !

Catullus, as he saw his mistress's tears and listened to her tale, forgot all but his former love, and, taking Lesbia in his arms, implored her to forgive his temporary infidelity. The play ended with a song: —

Vivons, Mignonne, vivons
Et suivons,
Les ébats qu'amour nous donne,
Sans que de vieux rechignés,
Refrognés,
Le sot babil nous étonne.

Rachel's first appearance in the *Moineau de Lesbie* was made after one of her innumerable quarrels with the Théâtre Français, in consequence of which she had retired from the stage for three months; the public, therefore, were not inclined to look with favorable eyes on the young actress who had dared to deprive them of one of their amusements. It was the night of Mademoiselle Anais' benefit also, and the *Moineau* was the last piece on the programme. Midnight had struck before it began. The audience was nearly asleep; but Rachel was determined to charm them out of their lethargy. Never had she played with such perfection. A murmur ran through the theatre after her first

speech, which, before the end, broke out into raptures of delight. The spoiled child was received back into favor again, and all her sins forgotten and forgiven.

It is needless to go into the details of Rachel's acceptance and ultimate rejection of *Medea*, M. Legouvé's piece, which was destined to exercise a more potent influence on her future than she herself could at first have foreseen. Her capricious and inconsistent behavior turned public opinion against her, and this, combined with Ristori's acceptance and great success in the part, determined the young actress to seek a less critical and more enthusiastic audience in the New World. After the undoubted success of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* and the *succès de vogue* of *Louise de Lignerolles*, Rachel urged the author to write another piece for her. He selected the subject of *Medea*, one which, as he said himself, he had always thought admirably suited to her classic genius. Without letting her know the title or subject of his tragedy, Legouvé, on the completion of his work, wrote to the actress, asking her when she could hear it read. Rachel fixed a day, telling him she was *un peu patraque* from over-exertion in Belgium, but that, if he would come to her villa at Montmorency, she was prepared to listen to what she hoped might be her winter success.

"The impression produced on her," the author tells us in his *Conférences Parisiennes*, "was not favorable. The title seemed distasteful. She had hoped for a modern *rôle*, and, when she had heard to the end, an eloquent silence reigned between us for a few moments, which said plainer than words, "Your piece is detestable." Ceding to the explanations and persuasions of Legouvé, however, with whom she read over each scene word by word, she accepted — or seemed to accept — the tragedy definitely. Her opinion was ratified by the *sociétaires* of the Comédie Française, who, in conclave, after recommending some corrections, gave their consent to the representation of the piece.

The repetitions began at the theatre on the 2d September, 1853. Legouvé thought there was no longer any chance of a frustration of his hopes. He little knew the changeable, fantastic nature with which he had to deal. On the 17th September he received a letter from a friend of Mademoiselle Rachel, who sometimes acted as her secretary, to the effect that the repetitions could not be proceeded with, owing to the actress's state of health; but that there was no need for hastening matters, as the theatre was occupied by the representation of a drama by M. Dumas. This letter was virtually a recantation of all her promises, as nothing would

induce her to recommence the rehearsals; and shortly after she accepted an engagement in Russia, and started on the 15th October. On the eve of her departure she wrote the following characteristic letter:—

I have made up my mind to go, and have summoned to my aid all the courage I can boast of to enable me to face the cold and cruel winter I must encounter. I beg you, Monsieur, not to add to my troubles—of which I have already so many—by being angry with me. I keep *Malice*, and hope to find her still a virgin on my return; but, whatever happens, I like her well enough to rescue her from whoever may have taken possession of her. Forgive the suggestion. You have often told me you were my friend. This is the moment to prove it to me.

Your devoted

RACHEL.

The author's feelings can be imagined. He had been hoaxed! Rachel had actually arranged the terms of her engagement at St. Petersburg while declaring to him she was so ill she could not rehearse, and now she seemed even to infer that another might act in it before she did.

"I rushed off to see her," relates M. Legouvé. "'Madame is out.' I was prepared for this, and returned the same evening. 'Madame is ill.' I was prepared for this also. But a day or two after she played *Polyeucte*. The piece over, she found me in her *loge* when she left the stage."

The interview that followed was a violent one, and strange details, we believe, have been given by Legouvé himself in a pamphlet published after her death. An open declaration of war ensued between them; but Rachel went to Russia, and for a time nothing more was said. On her return, Legouvé wrote to her to Warsaw, and her answer was equivalent to a refusal.

She told him she had sent in her resignation to the Théâtre Français (which she had not done), and that, therefore, as she had only six months to act there, she did not see her way to creating a new part. Legouvé's answer was a lawyer's letter, which she received the day after her return. Poor Rachel! other thoughts filled her heart and brain. Her sister Rebecca was dying of consumption in the south of France, and she had received an imperative call to her bedside. She still held out to the unfortunate author a hope of acting *Medea*; but, crushed to the earth as she was with sorrow, she could not face the idea of attempting a new *rôle*. If Rebecca were saved, then, she declared, as a thanksgiving offering she would devote nights and days to the proper representation of the piece: —

I wish with all my heart I had been able to study *Medea* during the six weeks I passed by the bedside of my poor sister! I am most anxious to reappear at the

Théâtre Français on the 30th May, but have not even been able to go over *Phèdre*. The very thought of adding my engagements at the theatre to those we I remain shut up at home, my grief continually revived by thinking and speaking of poor Rebecca. All my trust is in God, our friend. If He spares us this dear child, be sure that I will pay make up for lost time, and not rest until your piece is put upon the stage.

The impression produced on the excitable temperament of the young actress by the death of her sister was overwhelming. On her return from Russia she had hastened to Eaux Bonnes, in the Pyrenees, to visit the dying girl. As soon as her *congé* expired she was obliged to resume her duties at the Théâtre Français. She continued, however, her watchful care of her sister, and, while acting continuously, managed to perform the journey to and fro thrice in as many weeks. During one of these flying visits, the disease, as so often happens in consumption, appeared to take a favorable turn; the alarming symptoms vanished, and hope revived in the hearts of the watchers. Rachel took the opportunity to go and see Sarah, who was confined by some temporary indisposition to her own lodgings. Several friends were assembled in the room, and all, feeling the tension of the last few days relaxed, began to chat and laugh, the fun, as usual, being led by Rachel.

"In the midst of their gayety, Rose, the maid, rushed into the room. A fit of coughing had come on; the patient was in great danger; the doctor desired Mademoiselle Rachel's immediate presence." Rising with the bound of a wounded tigress, the young girl seemed to seek, bewildered, some cause for the blow that fell thus unexpectedly. Her eye lighted on a rosary blessed by the Pope, which she had worn as a bracelet ever since her visit to Rome. She had attached a talismanic virtue to the beads. Now she tore them from her arm, and dashed them to the ground, saying frantically, "It is this fatal gift that has entailed this curse upon me!" and rushed from the room. Hardly was she in time to find her sister alive. On the 23d June the body was brought back to Paris.

There is a rite among the Jews denominated the "pardon." Before the dead are buried, the relatives, one after the other, enter the room where the corpse lies, and, going up to it, call out the name several times, and invoke forgiveness for any injustice or wrong they may have been guilty of towards the deceased when living, ending with the repetition three times of the word, "Pardon! pardon! pardon!" When it came to Sarah's turn, the consciousness of her many shortcomings rushed over her with such force, that she threw herself on the ground

shrieking the name of her sister, and calling, with sobs and tears, for forgiveness. The actor Laferrière and a lady, who were present, raised her and led her away. When they returned, Madame Félix said to them, "It is Rachel's turn now. For God's sake, go! Do not look at her; do not stop." Dinah, who was also present, added her entreaties to her mother's. They all knew Rachel's reserved, peculiar disposition, and submitted without hesitation to her will and withdrew; but not before they caught a glimpse of her, led by her father, approaching, with brows deeply gathered, while all the other members of the family stood aside, evidently dreading one of her paroxysms of passion.

The next communication M. Legouvé received on the subject of his play was conclusive. It was dated the 20th September, three months after Rebecca's death, and was addressed to a friend of Rachel, Madame de S——, who enclosed it to the unfortunate author. In it Rachel begged her "dear Louise" to undertake, for her sake, the disagreeable task of informing M. Legouvé that she has decided never to act *Medea*. She acknowledged the commission to be an ungrateful one, but relied on her friend's affection to perform it. She confessed she had done all in her power, even learnt the first act,

but that she was certain she would have no success in a character that was odious and unnatural. The author, she acknowledged, had every right to feel indignant; therefore, not feeling sufficiently restored to health to hear his reproaches, she conveyed her expression of regret through a third person.

In all this affair, for which Rachel was so much blamed, we cannot but admire the self-restraint and artistic appreciation which induced her, in spite of many difficulties, to persist in her refusal of the part. Her style of acting was unsuited to the representation of quick or violent movement. "I have read your two last acts," she said to Legouvé. "I see my *rôle* is full of sharp, sudden movements; I rush at my children, carry them about, struggle with the crowd for their possession. This physical agitation does not suit me. All that I can express by physiognomy, attitude, by solemn, measured gesture, I can do; but where energetic pantomime begins my powers fail utterly." It would be well if some of our actors now-a-days would lay the following words to heart: "Medea may murder her children, poison her father-in-law; I feel unable to follow her example, even if I wished to. Holding the respect for the public that I do, and bearing a name entirely created by its favor and applause, I cannot allow myself to be

made the accomplice and instrument of theatrical favoritism."

It is probable that, after the second or third reading, she had come to the conclusion that *Médée* would not suit her; but it would have been better if she had bravely and loyally said so, instead of keeping the author in suspense for two years, and then cruelly blighting his hopes, and finding herself and the Comédie Française entangled in troublesome lawsuits, in the second of which the actress and the theatre were condemned to pay 12,000 francs damages — a poor consolation to Legouvé, who had fought so persistently for the representation of his piece. Another than Rachel ultimately acted the *rôle*, and made it one of her greatest triumphs.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE WANE.

By 1852 Rachel had begun to feel acutely the havoc that continual wandering and over-exertion had wrought upon her delicate constitution.

She wrote to her mother about her depression and incapacity for work in these terms: —

> I am not actually ill: I am very weak, but have no pain. I can sleep well, and can now remain alone at night. My appetite is not so good as at Paris. I went out walking with papa yesterday, but came home utterly exhausted. To-day I preferred to drive: I found that better. My leisure time is spent reading and working. It is impossible for me to study any *rôle*: I do not attempt it, therefore. I hope with returning health the dear old tragedies will inspire me once more. Now, it is my duty and my wish to take care of myself for the sake of my children, for you and my friends who have proved their affection. Your tired old daughter,
>
> RACHEL.
>
> I embrace all the family circle.

She had been invited by the King of Prussia to visit Berlin in the summer. Although suffering

from want of sleep and overtaxed nerves, the demon of unrest that now seemed to have permanently taken possession of her induced the actress to accept the invitation. In Brussels, on her way to Berlin, she almost completely broke down. Unable to sleep or eat, consumed by hectic fever, a prey to forebodings and hallucinations, she soon became a wreck of her former self. Little could those who saw her on the stage, electrifying her audience by her bursts of passion and superhuman energy, have known her for the same creature who, breathless and exhausted, lay fainting in the arms of her sister and her maid, and, when the representation was over, had to be carried to the carriage, to return to a sleepless bed, and to hours spent next day on the sofa in a state of prostration and weakness.

"The public, the footlights, Father Corneille," she wrote, "even my dress, impart a fictitious strength which enables me to act my part. That done, I am again powerless, and unable to think or speak until the next performance." Conquering her fatigue, however, she continued her journey, and the following letter, giving an account of her reception, shows how, in the midst of great physical suffering, adulation and success could stimulate her into a semblance of good spirits and life:—

My dear Historian. — Your daily correspondent thinks himself a Talleyrand, but cannot really boast of ordinary common sense. What he may have told you and you may have told him I know not. You are both demented, I think! This is my preface.

Now let us have the nuggets of literary and artistic! True and exact history of the apparition of a wandering tragedian at Berlin, Dresden, Potsdam and other places. Your correspondent declares that on the 12th I gave *Adrienne Lecouvreur* in the presence of kings and queens. Untrue! Know that this representation, which was to have taken place at the new palace at Potsdam, was adjourned in consequence of the great heat. The public thought neither Adrienne nor Rachel refreshing enough. First of Talleyrand's blunders. Secondly: The Emperor of Russia never saw me act, and could only judge of me in recitation. Third error of still correspondent (not worth his pay): On the subject of his Excellency, Count Redern, Chamberlain of the King of Prussia, who has been, in all my negotiations with the Court, courtesy and kindness itself to the stage and my fragile person (*ma maigrelette personne*), most useful; but there is not a word of truth in the statement that he has arranged my future engagement at St. Petersburg. *Attrape, petit Talleyrand!*

Now, then, for the plain, unvarnished tale as it really took place. How much will you pay me the column or the line? On the 8th July I gave my first representation of *Les Horaces* at the new palace of Potsdam mentioned above. A sumptuous repast had been prepared for me on my arrival at the palace, and, thinking to show honor to my artistic majesty, they had laid for me and my special attendants a separate table, while my confidants, pages, and lower order of traitors and heroes, were to sup in another room with another *menu*. I remonstrated

boldly, and, I am told, in eloquent terms, declaring that a good general, on the eve of a great battle, ought to mess with his soldiers, as the representation was to take place late in the evening. As soon as I had done, a royal carriage was placed at my disposal, little Rachel was actually put in it with royal honors, and His Majesty's vault accompanied me to a charming excursion round the magnificent chateau of Sans Souci (Happy Cottage).

She goes on to relate the successes of the evening, the compliments of the Empress of Russia and the King of Prussia, who, approaching, stammered in bad French, "*Vraiment, Mademoiselle, je suis tout bouleversé par votre faute!*" "I answered little civilities, that came much more easily to me than formerly with the Queen of England. While I was talking with her, I could not help thinking of the fogs of her river Thames."

Describing a *fête champêtre*, attended only by the royal families of Russia and Prussia, she says: —

> Elle eut bien en plein air, dans la ravissante île des Paons, où coule une jolie petite rivière tout-à-fait de poche qui se donne le genre d'avoir un nom, Havel, si je retiens bien, et qui sert de théâtre aux ébats de cygnes par troupeaux et blancs comme c'est le droit de tout cygne.

In front of this sylvan background she recited various portions of *Adrienne* and *Phèdre*, amid much applause from Imperial and Royal hands,

the Emperor of Russia informing her she was still greater than her reputation; and when she wished to rise to speak to him, he begged her to remain seated. On her respectfully insisting, he took both her hands and gently made her sit down again, saying, "I beg you not to rise, Mademoiselle; if you do, I will retire."

These civilities were accompanied by an invitation to Petersburg, and a substantial testimonial in the shape of two magnificent opals surrounded with diamonds, while the King of Prussia, through Count Redern, sent her 20,000 francs, and placed the opera-house at Berlin at her disposal for six nights. She wrote:—

> It needs a strong head to stand this adulation, the compliments, praise, bouquets. All the wonderful titles and names of these princes, dukes, and great personages who begged to be presented to me are enough to fill the lives of most artists. Never did Talma or Mars, my glorious predecessors, enjoy such an experience.
>
> . . . . .
>
> I will leave it to your discretion [she says at the end of the letter] to decide what you will publish of this long story concerning *ce pauvre petit bout de tragédienne*. The public call Rachel and her friends *Rachow*. Please decide how much ought to be known of these incomputable days by my contemporaries, or if the account of them ought only to be transmitted to posterity.

Poor Rachel! had she only known how little posterity would have troubled their heads or

cared to know about "those incomparable days"! It is only by her own sprightly and amusing letter that we hear about them now; while she, the great tragedian, in spite of her crowd of admirers, with emperors and kings to do her honor, has become but a memory and a name.

The invitation of the Emperor of Russia was remembered and acted upon the following year. This visit was the summit of earthly splendor and success to which Rachel was to attain. It reads like a fairy tale, with its princes and palaces, and jewels and sunshine; but we must tell it in her own words. The first letter is written to her mother from Warsaw: —

> What weather! What a delightful journey! Not a drop of rain, not a moment cold enough to necessitate the closing of the carriage window. Everywhere I am recognized and treated with respectful courtesy. I like Polish cooking; it reminds me of our Jewish stews. You know the fatigue I went through in Paris the last seven or eight weeks. I have slept so well in the little bed of the railway carriage, that I am quite rested. I have heard so much about Poland, its greatness and its fall! and, also, I think I am half a Pole in heart through my little Alexander. My attention was riveted on everything I saw on my way from the station to the hotel. I listen to every word said around me; and with all my heart I pity this brave people, deprived of the greatest blessing, its liberty.

She wrote to her sister Sarah, from St. Petersburg, one of her amusing letters: —

Yesterday evening your humble servant was entertained like a queen. No sham tragedy queen with a gilt pasteboard crown, but a real queen, stamped with the stamp of the Royal Mint. First of all, I must inform you that all the *Boyards* here pursue me, and stare at me as though I were some strange beast; I cannot take a step without having a crowd of them following me. In the street, in the shops, everywhere I go, I am looked at, pointed at, and remarked. I no longer belong to myself.

To sum up all, I was invited the other day to a grand banquet given in my honor at the Imperial Palace. A fact, O daughter of Papa and Mamma Félix! . . . It took place yesterday. What splendor! Behold! at my arrival at the palace, great footmen powdered and covered with gold lace, as in Paris, awaited my arrival, and escorted me upstairs. One took my cloak, another went in front and announced me, and I entered a drawing-room gilded from floor to ceiling, the occupants of which seemed to me to rush forward to greet me. One of the Grand Dukes, a brother of the Emperor, conducted me to the dinner-table. An immense table, raised upon a dais, but not laid for many guests, only thirty; but what a select company! The Imperial family, the Grand Dukes, the little dukes and archdukes — all the dukes, in short, of all calibres. All this tra-la-la of princes and princesses, curious and attentive, never took their eyes off me for a moment, watching my every movement, every smile, and listening to every word I spoke. You must not think I was embarrassed; not the least in the world! My self-possession never forsook me for a moment until the middle of the repast, which, by the way, was very good; but every one seemed more occupied with watching me than eating their dinner. At that moment the "toasts" in my honor began, and the scene that took

place was a most extraordinary one. The young arch-dukes, to get a better view of me, rose, mounted on their chairs, and even put their feet upon the table—I was going to say into the plates! No one seemed astonished. Evidently there is still a good deal of the savage in the princes of this country. They shouted, cried "Bravo!" and called upon me to make something. To reply to toasts by a single trill was, indeed, strange; but I was equal to the occasion. I rose, pushed back my chair, assumed the most tragic air of my repertory, and rushed into the great scene in *Thais*. A deathlike silence came over the company; you could have heard a fly, were there any in this country. They all listened religiously, bent forward towards me with gestures of profound admiration. Then, when I had come to an end, there was a fresh outbreak of cries of "Bravo!" clink of glasses and renewed toasts, to such an extent that I remained a moment quite overcome. Soon, however, the excitement took possession of me, the fumes of the wine, the scent of the flowers, all this enthusiasm, which certainly flattered my vanity, got into my head. I again rose, and began to sing, or rather declaim, the Russian National Hymn. On this it was no longer enthusiasm, but frenzy. They crowded round me, they pressed my hands, they thanked me. I was the greatest tragedian of all times past and future. Thus they went on for a good quarter of an hour.

But the best things come to an end at last; the hour struck when I must take my leave. I accomplished this with the same queenly dignity as when I arrived, conducted to the great staircase by the same Grand Duke, who, although gallant and attentive, never forgot his punctilious politeness. Then appeared the splendid powdered footmen, one of whom carried my cloak; I put it

on and was escorted by them to my carriage, which was surrounded by other footmen carrying torches to light me on my way.

She wrote to her mother, describing her benefit a few days later, telling her it was impossible to count the number of bouquets showered on her, and that she thinks she remembers having been recalled "seven hundred thousand times." The Empress gave her a splendid pair of earrings; several of the box and stall holders joined together to make her an offering of a wonderful diamond and ruby bracelet. The Grand Duchess Hélène sent her a magnificent Indian shawl. "*Ah! Madame, ma mère,*" she wrote, "*comme ce châle là fera bien sur ses épaules!*" The receipts on the evening of her "benefit" amounted to more than twenty thousand francs. She gave fifteen thousand to be divided amongst the theatrical people and the poor. This, and acting on several occasions for charity, made her immensely popular. She was overwhelmed with invitations from the best houses of the exclusive circles of St. Petersburg society, and the hotel where she was stopping was besieged with visitors; but, she concluded:—

It is time to put an end to all this. I wish to reserve all my energy to finish my six months at the Comédie Française. Moscow will be very brilliant; we shall become really too rich. They want me to return *here* next

winter; but I promise nothing, although I will never re-enter the Comédie Française, were they to give me a hundred thousand francs for six months. And said, I feel that it will be a sad wrench to separate from that dear little public who for seven years have been so good to me. I embrace you tenderly, also my father, my darling children, and my dear sisters.

It was not only on but also off the stage that Rachel enjoyed so great a success in St. Petersburg. The young nobles were all at her feet. At a dinner that was given her by a number of officers, they were discussing the chances of war between France and Russia.

"We will not say good-by, but *au revoir*, Mademoiselle," said one of her hosts. "We hope soon to applaud you in the capital of France, and to drink your health in its excellent wines."

"I am afraid, Monsieur," was the reply, "that France will not be rich enough to afford champagne to all her prisoners."

Rachel must have been amongst the last who crossed the frontier before war was declared between the two nations. It is said that she brought back 300,000 francs for her own share, and that Raphael's profits as manager amounted to 100,000 francs.

What a grim tragedy it is, not without its instructive lesson to us who look on, that Rachel should have touched the highest point of her

material success in these two years, 1852 and 1853, and the lowest of her artistic career. She had not been true to her genius, and her genius was forsaking her. Corneille and Racine, as she said herself, inspired her no more. She returned to Paris to act Latours St. Ybar's monstrous and detestable tragedy of *Rosemonde*, in which, without any regard to proportion or sequence, every horror and crime were concentrated into one act. She had wandered far from Pauline, Corneille, and Hermione, when she accepted such parts. She was a daughter of Corneille no more. Her refusal in this year of Legouvé's *Medea*, and acceptance of St. Ybar's *Rosemonde*, shows how far she had already dulled her artistic perception. Her absence of a year had not only displeased the public, but rendered them indifferent, and they let her act to an empty house. An epigram that appeared the day after tells the story of the change more pointedly than pages of description: —

> Pourquoi donc nomme-t-on ce drame Rosemonde ?
> Je n'y vois plus de rose et n'y vois pas de monde.

None knew better than Rachel the utter failure she had made. Like all great artists, she was always in direct communication with her audience; not a murmur or a movement escaped her. Like a delicately strung instrument, feeling

every breath of approval or displeasure, if her audience were less enthusiastic, less favorably disposed towards her, she understood it at once, and, by calling to her aid the wonderful resources of her energy and passion, had hitherto, when by long absences and grasping demands she had alienated their affections, conquered their ill-humor, and won them back to their allegiance. Now the siren was powerless; the charm was broken. Applause was given, but it was mechanical and cold. She entered her *loge*, overwhelmed with disappointment and despair. Jules Janin, who was present, describes the scene. Cowering in a corner of the green-room that was connected with some of the greatest triumphs of her career, she suddenly broke down, tears filled her eyes; and when an incautious friend tried to console her, she sobbed aloud, and, passionately tearing open her dress, said, "See! see how I am wasting away! It is a dying woman who weeps."

The shadow of death had indeed fallen on her. The following celebrated letter, written in 1855 to Emile de Girardin, shows how surely she felt the advances of the disease that killed her: —

Houssaye tells me that it was he who gave you the little Louis Quinze watch that you have arranged so nicely by changing the glass, through which you could see the entrails of the beast, and putting in an enamel with a baked

likeness of your humble servant. I think, and so does Sarah, the lower part of the face a little long. But enamels, or rather "*émaux*," for there are "*maux*" everywhere, are not to be changed once they have been through the fire. It is only a thing to be worn after my death. I am so "to pieces," I don't think that is far off now. If Madame de Girardin would write the *vie* of an historical consumptive patient, supposing there is one to be found, I think I could act it to draw tears, for I would weep myself. It is all very well to tell me I am only suffering from nerves. I feel there is something wrong. We were speaking of the watch: it is as if you had turned the key too hard—it goes "*crac*." I often feel something going "*crac*" in me when I wind myself up to play. The day before yesterday, in *Les Horaces*, when giving Maubant his cue, I felt the "*crac*." Yes, my friend, I was breaking to pieces. This is between ourselves, because of my mother and the little ones.

Always superstitious, she was now under the influence of the manifold fancies and tremors of disordered health and overtaxed nerves. She could not sleep, and saw visions. Her maid Rose related how one night she called her, and told her a long white figure had entered her room, and, on her asking who she was, the figure had thrown off her veil and revealed the face of a skeleton. Another time she declared Corneille had appeared to her, with a frown on his face, as though reproaching her for her disloyalty to the allegiance she had sworn to him in her youth. At a supper at Victor Hugo's some

months before. Rachel had discovered they were thirteen at table: she now frequently recurred with terror to the misfortunes that had pursued each of the guests. Victor Hugo and his wife in exile, Madame de Girardin dead, Pradier gone, Alfred de Musset gone, Count D'Orsay dead, Rotscha dead. "I alone am left, and that will not be for long."

There is little doubt that several times during her career Rachel inclined toward Catholicism. The splendor and pomp of the ceremonial made a deep impression on her excitable nature, and there were not wanting many who were interested in her conversion. It was an endless subject of jest and speculation in the Paris press of the time. In 1846 it was affirmed positively by one authority that she had been seen to repeat the "Belief" with clasped hands, and a rosary by her side. The sponsors were stated, the hour, the church, the officiating minister, while her godfather (Count Walewski) was declared to have given her a christening gift of diamonds to the amount of 50,000 francs. The following covert sneer was made at the tragedian's expense at the end of this tissue of romance: "Jean Jacques Rousseau became a convert for the sum of three francs."

She related once to some of her theatrical comrades the story of the Archbishop at Madame

Récamier's. "*Au reste, je ne mourrai pas sans être Chrétienne*," added the actress with a sigh. "For whose benefit, Madame, will this extraordinary performance be given?" asked M. Roussel, one of the actors. The only answer he received was one of those looks for which Rachel was celebrated, and never again was M. Roussel engaged as a member of her "troupe."

The exhortations of her family, all stanch Jews, did a great deal to keep her loyal to the religion of her fathers. When in Rome, Rebecca, remarking the profound impression made on her sister by the services of the Church, adjured her solemnly not to allow herself to be led away by the flattery and persuasions of those interested in her conversion, and there is little doubt that the young girl was a potent influence in preventing her change of faith. We already know that, when realizing Rebecca's illness at the last to be hopeless, like all superstitious people, she sought for some cause to account for the affliction that had fallen on her, and remembering the rosary blessed by the Pope, which she had worn round her arm as a bracelet ever since the visit to Rome, she tore it from her wrist and dashed it to the ground.

Rachel went to Egypt, as a forlorn hope, a few months before her death. She had sent directions for the sale of her furniture, and of

the small hotel in which she had resided. The whole world crowded to see the wonderful house of which they had heard so much, and the following account, given by an Englishman, of the auction of her goods, contains an allusion to the rosary, and shows the strange mixture of inconsistency that reigned in her surroundings, as in her opinions and convictions: —

Rather annoyed by the clamorous remarks and somewhat indecorous curiosity of my fellow sight-seers, I let the string of visitors proceed upstairs to the rooms upon the second floor before I made my way into a little dark hole leading out of the drawing-room, which I had heard my noisy predecessors dignify by the high-sounding title of the "Boudoir Chinois." It was an absolute hole, and so pitch dark that I was for some minutes in it before my eyes were able to distinguish a Chinese paper, with birds and flowers upon it, and one or two little brackets supporting Chinese pots, which stood in the angles of the walls, and in virtue of which I suppose the room obtained its name. I was just preparing to go up stairs, when a bust in white marble, which stood upon the chimney-piece, attracted my attention; the head was of a young and handsome man, with a shortish beard divided into two points, and round the neck there hung a rosary — forgotten, like so many other things, in the distress of that departure. I was greatly struck by this detail, and waited impatiently for the return of the *concierge*, whom I heard conveying the other party to the door. At last he came, and, anxious to ascertain on which of her adorers poor Rachel had left this singular necklace hanging, I immediately inquired, "*De qui est ce buste?*"

"*C'est de Canova*," was the reply.

"*Mais de qui est-ce le portrait?*" I persisted, under the impression that the man did not know what he was speaking about.

"*C'est le portrait du Christ.*"

I left the house bewildered with the confusion of ideas created by the curious assemblage of heterogeneous objects I had seen there and strangely moved by the remembrance of that image of Our Blessed Lord in Rachel's Chinese boudoir with the poor dying Jewess's rosary hung about His neck.

Rachel herself, in a letter written on her return from Egypt, full of the playful fun of her more brilliant years of health and happiness, dispels any doubt there may still have existed on the subject of her conversion:—

On the deck of the *Chéops*, returning from Damietta, one of my travelling companions was the bishop *in partibus*, of Byblos, Mgr. Pellerin. He was introduced to me. I thanked him for having caused a mass to be said to St. John, the Patron Saint of Malta, as thanksgiving for my restoration to health; but, obedient to a hint I then gave him, he did not once allude to religion, conversion, or anything of the kind. Until we reached Marseilles, indeed, we principally talked of cookery. He was a prelate fond of eating. One day he asked me suddenly, alluding, no doubt, to my first appearance on the stage—if I had ever eaten any of the famous Gymnase "*galette*." "I never go there," I answered, "without filling my pockets." There was doubtless a certain amount of confession in this avowal, but it was the first and only time in my life I ever approached Catholicism.

CHAPTER XVII.

AMERICA.

SEVEN years before she actually went, the project of a tour in America had been taken into consideration by Rachel. We find her, in 1848, writing from Liége, in one of her moments of depression, to tell her faithful confidante, Sarah, that, energy and lightness of heart having forsaken her forever, she was possessed with the idea of either retiring to Switzerland and putting her boys into a college at Geneva, or of going to the United States, making a fortune, and finishing her career as a member of the Théâtre Français with a comparatively small salary.

Art and artists had suffered severely during this year of revolution and political excitement. Rachel, by yielding to the exigencies of the moment, succeeded in filling the coffers of the Théâtre Français; but even the "Marseillaise" failed to bring the showers of gold to which the young actress was accustomed. It was certainly flattering to her professional vanity to receive exotic flowers from *les enfans de la patrie;* but

Jacques Bonhomme's pockets were not inexhaustible mines of wealth, and Rachel soon wearied of his enthusiasm and applause. What wonder, then, that the New World on the other side of the Atlantic began to loom as a possible Eldorado through the gloom and uncertainty surrounding her in the old one.

Before the end of 1848, however, the prospect of an Empire in France improved the artistic outlook, and we find her writing again to Sarah in better spirits: "Tell me all the fun that is going on. I long to laugh, and declare you my witty and wise buffoon; decide yourself what the salary of the appointment shall be. I have made up my mind to enjoy life as much as I possibly can before I return. Away, dull care! Forward! march to the roll of drums, and, like the clown in the pantomime, make three somersaults backwards, with a 'Here I am again!' I love you, and embrace you hurriedly, for I am off to act *Camille*." Though only a Frenchwoman by adoption, Rachel had much in common with that changeable, volatile race, registering like a barometer every variation in the social or political horizon.

Meantime her brother Raphaël, once the idea of going to America had been mooted, did not allow the scheme to fall to the ground. He aspired to be the *impresario* of the expedition,

which he felt certain would produce an incalculable pile of dollars for his own and his sister's benefit. Rachel's extraordinary success in her last dramatic campaign in Russia had fired his imagination afresh. If such a harvest were to be reaped in Europe, what might they not expect in America, where Jenny Lind, although not gifted with the world-wide fame of Rachel, had just made a fortune?

For some time the young actress did not allow herself to be persuaded by his arguments. The story went, that the only deep attachment she had ever known — which jealousy on the lover's part and mischief-making on the part of others had broken off years before — again asserted its sway over her heart, and that she could not face the thought of quitting Paris and him she loved. Whatever the real reason may have been, it evidently needed a more potent incentive than Raphael could offer to induce her to forsake the critical and appreciative public who had applauded the little Rachel when, poor, unknown, and insignificant, she had first appeared before them, and which, in spite of storms and sulks on both sides, she had ruled absolutely for seventeen years. Alas! the incentive was given by the secession of this very public whom she had tyrannized over and on whose fidelity she had relied too confidently.

A beautiful young Italian actress, Adelaide Ristori, appeared on the boards of the Italian Opera House, in the part of Francesca da Rimini, on the 24th May, 1855. Her success was immediate and unqualified, as great as anything Rachel herself had ever achieved, and the more wonderful, seeing that only one-fourth of the audience understood a word of the language in which she acted.

All the enemies Rachel had made in her profession — and their name was legion — sang the praises of the new star. She was not only the most admirable of actresses, but the most adorable of women, generous, considerate of her fellow actors and actresses, womanly, pure, simple, — possessing every good quality, in fact, the old idol had not. Clesinger, the sculptor, said with enthusiasm, after he had seen her, "I will break the statue of Tragedy I have made, for Ristori has taught me it was only the statue of Melodrama." Rachel had been his model for the Tragic muse.

Legouvé, whom Rachel had treated so cavalierly on the subject of *Medea*, took the play to Ristori, who made it her greatest part. Alexandre Dumas the Elder, many of whose plays Rachel had refused to act, was one of the most enthusiastic in praise of the new tragedian. The following story was told at the time. Dumas

was present at Ristori's acting of *Marie Stuart*, and was applauding to the echo. An individual seated beside him volunteered timidly that he did not think she was as fine an actress as Rachel.

"I tell you, Sir," answered Dumas, sharply, "to appreciate the genius of Ristori, you must know Italian thoroughly. Do you know Italian?"

"Yes, Monsieur; as well as you know French."

"I thought so," said Dumas, good-naturedly; "you do not know Italian."

Rachel went to see Ristori, and was perceptibly piqued at the applause that greeted her rival. "Rachel never applauded me once," said the Italian actress to M. Legouvé. "Madame," was the answer, "Rachel's jealousy was the one thing wanting to confirm your fame." Next day Ristori went to see *Camille*. "*Ah! que cette Rachel est heureuse!*" she exclaimed with enthusiasm, "*les Français la comprennent-elle!*" She had no right, however, to complain; although she did not talk their language, she managed to win the hearts of that fastidious and critical public, who averred she was as fine as Rachel in tragedy, and finer in comedy. Rachel, indignant and disappointed, made up her mind to shake the dust of Paris off her feet. The fatal engagement which, filled by a strange

presentiment, she had hitherto refused to ratify, was signed at last. For the space of more than a year she bound herself hand and foot to her brother, who undertook all the financing and organizing of the expedition. On the 29th April, 1855, she had been appointed Professor of Declamation at the Conservatoire, and her friends urged this, among other pleas, to persuade her not to go; but in vain. Pique, jealousy, the wish to add fresh laurels to those already won, and the hope of returning triumphant to Paris, and thus regaining the position she had lost, or, as she expressed it, becoming again "La Tragédienne," not "Une tragédienne," all conspired to fortify her resolution, and make her deaf to warnings and entreaties.

Before her departure she consented to appear once more, suing for the suffrages of those who, until now, she had ruled despotically. Alas! the fickle public, like Clesinger the sculptor, not only set up a new statue, but broke the old one. The foreigners that flocked to Paris for the Great Exhibition, and the Parisians themselves, angry with the favorite who was leaving them, and glad, as Alfred de Musset says, of a change, flocked to the Italian Opera House to hear Ristori. No longer were there *queues* down to the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré; no longer struggling at the box-office for tickets. Many

certainly came, but the receipts did not exceed, and in some cases were not so large as, those when Rachel first appeared in 1838. Would it have been otherwise had they known that her name had appeared for the last time on the bills of the Comédie Française — that never again would they hear that musical, sad voice, or see that weary, pale face, or be moved to awe, pity, and terror by the sublimity and greatness of that genius to which they dared to compare the artificial elaboration of her Italian rival? We, indeed, except from the fascination of Ristori's beautiful appearance and manner, find it difficult to understand how, for one moment, she can have been compared to Rachel. Time has re-adjusted the scales which the passions and jealousies of the moment had put so hopelessly out of gear.

On the 27th July, four days after her series of representations at the Français, Rachel left for London. To the last moment the public did not realize that she really intended leaving them. She had gone to Moscow, England, Germany, they said, but would never make up her mind to cross the Atlantic; and, indeed, she seemed of the same opinion herself, for she actually came down to the station and on the platform hesitated about going. Later in the day, however, she started, and arrived in

London about the same time as the rest of the company.

On the 30th of the month she gave her first representation at the St. James's Theatre, under the direction of Mr. Mitchell. "No spark of the old fire," the English critics declared, "was wanting." No worn-out reputation did she take to the other side of the Atlantic, they averred, and they only regretted that the actress, in full perfection of her powers, should leave an appreciative public. The Duke d'Aumale, who was present at her representation of *Les Horaces*, said to Mr. Mitchell as he left, "*Cette belle langue de Corneille, cette langue de mon pays, que je viens d'entendre, est pour moi comme une fraîche rosée dans une brûlante journée de printemps.*"

Rachel appeared for the last time in Europe on the boards of old Drury Lane. On the 4th August she wrote to her son Alexander: —

DEAR SON, — How are you and my little Gabriel? Write and tell me you are both well and good, and you may be sure I shall keep quite strong and happy for the whole of my journey. This evening I give my fourth representation in London; by the 9th I shall have given the six evenings I promised.

I hope, dear Alexander, that while your little mother goes to gather laurels and dollars in America you will gather your laurels in the approaching examination. Think of the happiness it will be, whenever I receive a

good report of you. Gabriel is still too young for much study, but his turn, I hope, will come.

Grandmamma returns to Paris as soon as we have embarked for America. She will bring you the latest news, and will give you both two tender kisses from me.

Your little Mother,
who loves you both with all her heart.

She wrote to her mother an account of the journey out. She said her health was good in spite of pains in her chest: "The ache in my side has even disappeared for the present. I have certainly felt other pains in my back and chest; but I must never forget that my chest was always a weak one."

Her very insistance, however, on her happiness and well-being is a little suspicious: —

I should be ungrateful, indeed, did I feel the least regret at leaving the children that I adore, and a mother whom I love with all my heart. No, no! Mademoiselle, go this tour (*cette gentille tournée*), and then you will be able to say you have earned your daily bread. White people must do some work since "niggers" refuse it. What nonsense I am writing; but it is only to prove, dear mother, that you must not conjure up either black or blue devils. I am well. And young America only will grow older from the emotions our fine old tragedies will arouse in her.

Léon de Beauvallet, one of the troupe whom Rachel took with her, has written an account of this "*Odyssée*," as he calls it, of French tragedy

in America; it is brimful of fun, rattle-headed nonsense, and astounding caricature, but greatly offended the Americans of the day.

She arrived at New York on the 22d, and on the 3d September, in spite of the disfigurement of the whole company, Beauvallet tells us, by mosquito bites, she gave her first representation on the boards of the Metropolitan Theatre, Broadway. The following account of it is given by a well-known pen in *Harper's Magazine* for November, 1855: —

Rachel's first night was truly triumphant. It was a quiet, appreciative, sympathetic, and intelligent audience. It was perhaps, not more than one third American. The rest were French, and foreigners of all nations. There were many from the South. Among the crowd, here and again, there were the faces of known and unknown poets; the editors were there. . . . There was an intellectual atmosphere in the house. "This is a service of art," seemed to be the feeling of every one present. It had come round, in the inscrutable course of history, that *Cornelie* and the old French drama was to make its appeal to America and a spirit the most different to its own. . . . The music ceased; there was a lull. The curtain rose and disclosed a scene in Rome. Two draped figures, like Romans in old pictures, entered and declaimed. They turned to go, but before they left the scene — before the eye was quite ready — as if she had suddenly become visible, without entering, like a ghost — there was Rachel. She stood in full profile to the audience. Her dress was a falling white cloud of grace. You have seen such drapery in your idealized remembrance of the great statues.

Her left hand, which was toward the audience, hung by her side; the right was motived in her robe. Her head was sent forward, a gold tiara holding her black hair. The poise, the impression, the movement, were all precision and prophecy. As Jean Paul Sylds all the sadness of the lyrical tragedy, as a lost lilac all the beauty of the flower, so this low plaint of Rachel was the touch of the key-note.

The audience received her with full applause. There was no hooting, no jeering, no attempt of any kind. One half-woman, further off, tried to yelp, and was instantly suppressed. The reception was generous and intelligent. It was the right reception for a great artist. It acknowledged her previous fame by courtesy. It expressed the intelligence which could appreciate a verdict that came.

Yes, astonished friend, appoint or revise even a Parisian decision.

Rachel was equal to that reception and to her *rôle* of great artist. There was not so much as the lift of an eyebrow in condescension to the audience. "I will not buy success at any cheap rate," she seemed to say; "accept me for what I really am, or dishonor me. It is easy to rave and rage. Here I am, without accessory of scene or company, alone, upon a bare stage, declaiming verse in an unknown tongue—verse which you have been accustomed to consider absurd and stilted. But you show that you have right to sit in judgment on the thing itself, and you shall do so."

So simply she begun. The artist and the audience were morally worthy. Her action was symmetrical throughout. No one part was more perfectly done than another; but the varied importance of the parts made the differing excellence of the acting. The applause was as discriminating. It shifted from sensation to murmur,

and ran all along the line of feeling until it exploded in enthusiasm. In the extreme moment of learning her lover's fate, Camille sinks fainting in the chair, after a pantomime of fascinating exertion, which is the very height of her art. Just then some bewildered poet flung a large bouquet upon the stage, which fell, shattered like a cabbage, at the very feet of the Roman who was declaiming. Perplexed for a moment — uncertain whether the laws of our theatre might not require some notice to be taken of the bouquet — unwilling, upon the first night, to do anything contrary to courtesy, the Roman faltered and paused, made a halting step towards the flowers, raised them doubtfully, and turned towards Rachel, when a sudden "No!" rang through the house like a gust, and the dismayed Thespian dropped the bouquet like a hot cannon-ball, and proceeded with his part.

For an hour and a half the curtain was up, and the eyes of the audience were riveted upon Rachel. For an hour and a half there was the constant increase of passionate intensity, until love and despair culminated in the famous denunciation; the house hung breathless upon that wild whirl of tragic force, and Camille lay dead, and the curtain was down, before that rapt and amazed silence was conscious of itself.

Then came the judgment — the verdict which was worth having after such a trial — the crown, and the garland, and the poem. The curtain rose, and there, wan and wavering, stood the ghost of Camille, the woman Rachel. She had risen in her flowing drapery just where she had fallen, and seemed to be the spirit of herself. But, pale and trembling, she flickered in the tempest of applause. The audience stood and waved hats and handkerchiefs, and flowers fell in pyramids; and that quick, earnest, meaning "Brava!" was undisturbed by any discordant sound.

It was a great triumph. It was too much for the excited and exhausted Rachel. She knew that the news would instantly fly across the sea—that Paris would hear of her success over a new continent—that, perhaps, Kean's fine words in Othello were too large for the slipper. She wavered for a moment. Then some one rushed forward and caught her as she fell—and the curtain came down.

There was no attempt at a recall. There was something too real in the whole scene. The audience silently arose and slowly separated. Lounging in groups upon the landings with white faces and bated breath. They all thought Her beautiful. They all forgave everything, and they all doubted everything. It was a rare triumph. We so love what we greatly admire, that we all longed to love Rachel.

From Raphael's point of view, it was not a success. They made 5,016 dollars (26,334 francs); but what a falling off when compared with the 93,780 francs produced by Jenny Lind's first representation, which they had hoped to rival and even surpass. The second evening on which *Phèdre* was given, the receipts fell off by 7,500 francs, only 19,587 francs being made. Never again were the profits as large as the first evening.

Rachel had deceived herself, or rather her brother Raphael had deceived her by deceiving himself. The prognostication that "Cousin Jonathan would not relish an unmusical drama not acted in his own language" was verified. They were obliged to buy a book and study the play

before they went. Beauvallet tells a story of an American, on one occasion when *Le Mari de la Veuve* and *Bajazet* were being acted, reading the first through religiously, thinking it was the second. Rachel declared that the turning of the pages startled her the first evening, for it sounded on the stage like a shower of hail, and added, with a smile, that she would have all the *libretti* rearranged so as to bring the fine passages into the middle of the page; but the thing that tried her most was the way in which, after one or two acts, the audience disappeared. Beauvallet tells us they simply came to be able to say they had seen Rachel, and then sauntered off to enjoy the feats of the "Ravel" brothers, and the man who swallowed a sword at a circus close by. She missed the appreciative cultivated Parisian public, product of centuries, who hung on every word and gesture, and, when the curtain went down, discussed the points with sympathy and comprehension. The newspapers were full of her praises; the enthusiasm among the general public was great. A restaurant-keeper in Broadway, De Beauvallet tells us, invented a pudding "*à la Rachel;*" a shoemaker, "*Les Guêtres à la Rachel;*" ten different hair-dressers, "*Les Coiffures à la Rachel;*" but they did not crowd to see her, except in *Adrienne Lecouvreur* and *Angelo*, and then it was rather

because of the richness and picturesqueness of the dresses and scenery than because they cared for the play. There is little doubt that had not Rachel's state of health put an end to the representations, financial considerations would have induced her and her brother to relinquish an expedition which threatened to end in complete disaster.

At first the climate of America seemed to suit Rachel. "*Je suis enchantée!*" she wrote to her mother. "*J'espère avoir la vie aussi dure que mes vieilles tantes.*" She was full of vivacity and brightness in spite of the smallness of the receipts.

On the 8th September she wrote to the President, sending him 1,000 dollars for the relief of the unfortunate sufferers from yellow fever in Norfolk and Portsmouth. This gift was much laughed at in Paris; Augustine Brohan, her comrade, propounded maliciously the following riddle: "*Pourquoi Rachel est-elle comme le vin de Madère?*" "*Parce qu'elle s'amélore en voyageant.*"

Shortly after her arrival in New York, Rachel was asked by the French colony there to sing the "Marseillaise." She refused, addressing the following letter to the deputation who had been commissioned to make the request: —

DEAR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN, Seven years have passed since I sang the "Marseillaise." A "*je ne sais quoi*" gave me then the semblance of a voice, besides

which my health was stronger. Now I am often completely tired out after a representation. I should be afraid, therefore, of compromising other interests than my own, if I increased the strain put upon my strength.

I trust you will accept the assurance of my sincere regret in not being able to accede to your wishes, especially when I tell you that I hoped to sing the "Marseillaise" as much as to act Corneille's finest part. Accept the assurance of my distinguished sentiments.

A witty travesty of this letter was given at the time: it began —

Now the Empire is peace, and were I, dear compatriots, to make the least effort to sing the "Marseillaise" in New York, I feel that, on my return to Paris, I should be compelled to sing very small indeed. . . .

Both by hearsay and experience, the Americans had been made aware of the exacting and greedy temperament of Rachel and her brother, and many were the jokes made at their expense. It was, indeed, in this pitiless New World that Rachel was destined to test how low she had descended in her art. She was wont to say, "*La fortune c'est la mesure de l'intelligence;*" and in the pursuit of fortune, not to advance the honor of Racine or Corneille, she had come across the Atlantic. The company of actors she had brought with her were, as one critic frankly expressed himself, "but a bundle of Hebrew sticks destined to fill the minor characters."

No attempt was made to put the tragedies fittingly on the stage. Beauvallet gives a most comic account of the arrangements for the representation of *Virginie:*—

"No Lares or Penates to be found; the Roman Forum represented by the Paris Boulevards, with '*restaurant*' painted on one of the nearest houses, while a flowered carpet covered the street. The hundred lictors of Appius were represented by twenty nondescript individuals disguised in yellow coats of mail, red petticoats, blue breeches, large tin spears in their hands, old leather boots on their legs, and, to complete all, American 'goatees' on their chins. Ballet girls in muslin petticoats, men dressed as jockeys, and mediæval Spaniards put the finishing touch to the medley."

When the curtain went up, the scene was greeted by a roar of laughter from the audience; and Appius's lictors had to submit to a continual fire of ridicule.

In the mean time, to add to her discomfiture and annoyance, came rumors from Paris of the publicity that had been given to the non-success of the expedition. Janin, in one of his eloquent, amusing, and merciless *feuilletons*, rated her and the Americans soundly. He touched upon the "*demande impie*" that had been made for her to sing the "Marseil-

laise," and upon her refusal to accede to the request: —

"But Mademoiselle Rachel did not answer with the indignation justifiable under the circumstances. She said she had no voice left to sing the 'Marseillaise;' but what she really ought to have answered was, 'What? I come to you, my brain full of *chef d'œuvres*, my hands full of palms and crowns; I come bringing you the miracles of three centuries, bringing you Augustus, Pericles, and Louis XIV., and you ask me for the "Marseillaise"? I bring you Corneille and Racine, and you ask for Santerre and Danton. Go, you are unworthy of these great men. You are incapable of understanding the godlike sorrow and heaven-born grief of these great works. . . .'

"Do not let us expose our great tragedian any longer to the contempt of a democracy. We hope, perhaps, that Mademoiselle Rachel has seen long ago that she does not speak the 'language of the country;' and let us hope she will give place to the performing bear, to the nigger preachers, to the Barnum circus, and other amusements congenial to the American people. Let her return to us; she will be still more welcome if she return before we expected her; we will console her for her neglect there; her very disappointment will increase her popularity

here: and we implore her to let this be a lesson never again to leave us."

On the 17th November Rachel bade farewell to New York in *Phèdre* and *Le Moineau de Lesbie*. An ode, written for the occasion by M. de Trobriand, *Rachel à l'Amérique* was recited by her and received with hearty applause. From New York the company proceeded to Philadelphia, where Rachel caught a violent cold when acting in *Les Horaces* at the Walnut Street Theatre. She had already been coughing before she left New York; but, regardless of the most ordinary sanitary precautions, had taken no notice, and, anxious to get through her engagements as fast as she could, had acted repeatedly four nights running, — a strain which the fragile body could have hardly borne in her strongest days. She now broke down utterly, and was obliged to give up all idea of appearing before the Philadelphians again.

The doctors ordered removal to a warmer climate as soon as the invalid could travel. On the 27th, therefore, she and her father and sister made their way by short stages to Charleston; the company there endeavored to give three or four performances without her, but the theatre was quite empty. Rachel was the only attraction. A French play they could not understand was wearisome enough at all times, but without

the great actress it was an infliction not to be borne. In spite, therefore, of the urgent representation of the doctor that absolute repose was necessary for her restoration to health, yielding to the persuasions of her brother, she consented to appear in *Adrienne Lecouvreur.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

RETURN.

On the 17th December, 1855, the play-bills announced Rachel's appearance in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, "positively for the last time in America." Those who wrote the announcement little knew that it was not only her last appearance in America, but her last appearance on any stage.

A story is told of Forrest, the celebrated American actor, when in his old age he had alienated wife and friends by his violent temper, being complimented on his acting of King Lear. "Act Lear! What do you mean, Sir? I do not act Lear. I act Hamlet, Richard, Shylock, Virginius, if you please; but, by God! Sir, I am Lear!" Rachel might have said the same with regard to Adrienne Lecouvreur. For the first time "*l'Adrienne de nos jours*," as Gautier called her, was really in love. For the first time during her storm-tossed, artificial life the prospect of peace, repose, and an honorable existence seemed to be hers. For the first time the blue roses of

happiness seemed to be within her reach, when they were snatched from her grasp by death:

O triomphes du théâtre! mon cœur ne battra plus de vos ardentes émotions! Et vous langues étudiées d'un art que j'aimais tant, rien ne restera de vous après moi — rien ne survit à nous autres — rien que le souvenir.

M. Chérie, who acted the Michonnet to her Adrienne that evening, remarked significantly to a friend as he left the theatre, "I had a niece who died of consumption. We have seen Rachel act for the last time!"

On the 19th she embarked for Havana, where she hoped to fulfil a lucrative engagement; but the doctors, much to Raphael's disgust and to the disappointment of the Cubans, insisted on complete rest and absence from all excitement. On the 23d December she wrote: —

I remained some time at Charleston, so as not to expose myself to the sudden change of climate. I feel rested, that is to say, I took a complete holiday at Charleston for nineteen days, but am not quite myself yet. I cough incessantly. I wished to give a representation two days before I left; a number of charming ladies having asked me to do so, I consented. That evening of Adrienne (it was Adrienne that they asked me to act) did not increase my illness, but it showed me that some time must elapse before I continued my tour through America. I am now at Havana, under the care of a good doctor, tolerably comfortable in my domestic arrangements, while the warmth, tempered by a refreshing breeze, is delightful.

If I only had my children with me I should like to remain here for years. The subscription for the first twelve months is already more than [illegible]. The day of my [illegible] is not [illegible]. Perhaps I shall be ordered several months' rest, and shall not act at all. Whatever happens, I am resigned. All I know is that my love for my children increases every day. I must live to see them grown up. I did not write to you from Philadelphia; I felt dying then.

Then comes the last despairing outcry, when she feels the impossibility of struggling any longer against the terrible fate that had overtaken her: —

HAVANA, 7th January, 1855.

N'allez pas! m a-t-on dit — et moi, je suis venue.[1]

I am ill — very ill. My body and mind have both sunk down to nothing. I shall not be able to act at Havana either; but I have come, and the Director, exerting his rights, has demanded damages to the extent of 7,000 piastres. I paid, and have also paid the coins up to to-day. I bring back my money away to the banks of the Seine, and I, perhaps, like another Napoleon, will go and ask a stone on which to lay my head and die at the Invalides. But no: I will find my two guardian angels — my young sons. I hear their voices calling me. I have been too long away from their kisses, their caresses, their love.

I do not regret the money I have lost; I do not regret the fatigue I have undergone. I have carried my name as far as I could, and I bring back my heart to those who love me.

[1] Quotation from the ode written by M. de Trobriand.

And so the great tragedian, who for years had filled Europe with stories of her fascinations and the power of her genius, now returned to Paris, the scene of her greatest triumphs, sad and broken-hearted, with but one desire, one thought — to escape publicity and be left in peace. Immediately on her arrival she left again for Meulan, where, in companionship with the man who ruled her heart, she spent some months vainly endeavoring to build up her shattered health. She had brought back her heart to those who loved her; but her body, "that body of which she had been so proud," was a mere wreck. In her calmer moments Rachel knew she was doomed; but, with the strange hoping against hope which distinguishes consumptive patients, she entertained to the last the hope of recovery. The one thing she longed for was to live forgotten by the world, — that world for whose notice and applause she had struggled so hard all her life. The shadow of death had passed across her sun, and she who had, as a rule, so recklessly defied public opinion, now was filled with dread that the scandal-mongers, pandering to the public taste for gossip, should write garbled accounts of her life, and give them forth to the world. "Perhaps this is the last thing I shall ever write," she said, giving her autograph to a friend who had asked for it. "In a week from

this time I may be food for worms and writers of biographies."

She, who had once been leader of all that was most brilliant in the literary and artistic society of Paris, was now only able to receive one friend at a time, and then for not more than an hour or so: "If you wish to see me at Meulan, take the Rouen Railway, Rue Saint Lazare, two steps from your house. Do you like country sunshine? take the eleven o'clock train; you will arrive at one. Only a pitiless two hours of conversation, and you must leave me. As soon as the northeast wind forsook the banks of the Seine, I had some days that were better. Unfortunately the improvement did not continue. You can boast of having *une patraque d'amie*."

Arsène Houssaye, in his sketch of Rachel, relates one or two conversations he had with her at this time: —

"'Alas!' she said to me, 'I have done with illusions. I see myself already in the tomb. You spoke at Rebecca's grave; you will speak also at mine.' Then an after-thought struck her. 'And yet, no; say nothing, and prevent others from making speeches. Oblivion! you do not know the charm of being forgotten after a life spent before the public.'

"She spoke simply. Off the stage she had a horror of declamation, except when making fun.

"'You know my life and heart. It is not necessary to tell you I am not so bad as they would say. No one escapes his destiny. I was born away in the mountains, I hardly know where. I regret I did not live an obscure existence, like so many honest women who think of nothing but their children. Dragged by fate to Paris, I was obliged to live the life of Paris, passing from misery to luxury, exposed to dangers and temptations. My calumniators did not succeed in making me immoral. God loved me, since He gave me children. The justice of God is greater towards poor weak mortals than the justice of men. I do not fear Him, for I know there are mothers of families who will not be better received than I shall be at the Mercy Seat. If the writers of scandalous memoirs should seek one day to parody my life, tell it in all its simplicity. You know well I was not educated at the Sacré Cœur, and those who are, are not many of them better than I am, for I have only sinned against myself, while many of those young ladies only passed through the sacrament of marriage to betray it.'

"We were walking in the park; the dinner-bell rang. 'I think I have suddenly become very serious,' she said. 'I must not do so again, for I wish the evening to pass gayly.' Rachel

was charming the whole time of dinner, but afterwards nearly fainted away with fatigue. She then talked of the possibility of her marriage with the man she loved."

Houssaye tells us, however, that, at the bottom of her heart, she knew this to be but a dream, one of those phantoms she had pursued all her life; the state of her health alone precluding the possibility of such a thing. She wrote, indeed, about this time to Jules Lecomte:—

I have heard many people say that it was better to be abused by the press than not to be written about at all. I thank you, therefore, for the mention you make of me; but why, dear friend, will you persist in ascribing intentions of marriage to me — alone, all now? I have two sons whom I love: I am thirty-seven by my certificate of birth — I look as if I were fifty. Eighteen years of passionate tiredness on the stage, wild expeditions to every quarter of the globe, winters at Moscow, treachery at Waterloo, the stormy sea, the ungrateful land, — all these soon age a little bit of a woman like me. But God protects the brave, and He seems to have created expressly for me a little corner, unnamed on any map, where I can forget my troubles, my fatigues, my premature old age! And yet you lend your unkind gossip into the midst of the birds who sit on the branches of my trees and sing songs of welcome.

If I had died in America, you would have been the first (with a generosity worthy of your head and heart) to consecrate a eulogistic *feuilleton* to me. And because I recovered in a miraculous manner, because I can hope to see you again and squeeze your hand as an old friend,

you say to yourself, "Thanks be to goodness she is still alive! Now we will set to work to torture her." And there you are, delighted to excite my nerves — which I confess are over-susceptible — for the sake of amusing the public at the expense of poor little Rachel. A fine triumph for your intelligence! As if there were no other victims!

Is this the way you ought to behave to a poor creature who returns from the other world? Come, be just and good, and acknowledge that your statement was quite unjustifiable, so that I may pardon you at once.

By Jupiter! I consider I am very good-natured to treat you in this manner, for this letter is certainly not written by a *grande magicienne*, but by a *bien ordinaire qui s'appelle* RACHEL.

The last short period that Rachel was destined to pass on earth free from bodily pain was these summer months. A stranger visiting Paris gives us a glimpse of her, still brilliant and fascinating. Although no longer able to appear on the stage, she was a regular attendant at the Théâtre Français, when in Paris. The narrator tells that one evening, loitering in the *foyer* of the theatre, he heard a servant ask the *ouvreuse* if she had found a shawl which Mademoiselle Rachel had left in her *loge* the night before. On inquiry, he learned that Rachel was stopping in Paris for a few days, on her way to Ems, whither she was ordered by her doctor, to drink the waters. Anxious to see

her, he called next day at her hotel, Rue Trudon, and was admitted: —

"She was in full dinner-dress, a beautiful blue silk, fresh from the dressmaker's — in fact, the *modiste* was putting in the last pins as we came in. She was going to the Champs Élysées to dine *en petite comité* at Émile de Girardin's.

"She appeared as well as I had ever known her, both in point of beauty and health, and I thought she had fairly recovered from her American misfortunes. Although it was July, she complained of the cold, and laughed and talked as she lit the fire, but said her voice was hopelessly gone. She spoke of her great rival, Ristori, with an earnestness and intensity of interest which showed how much she had been stung at the disparaging comparisons made between them. She discussed her merit with wonderful tact and fairness; but it was evident that she longed, if it had only been possible, for a contest face to face with her, in order that the world might do her justice."

After her return from Ems, later in the summer, Rachel wrote again to Houssaye, her *directeur spirituel*, asking him to come to Meulan to pay her another visit: —

My dear Causeur — (others are only *friends*). — Come here and gossip with me, under the trees, of the

days that are past. Sometimes I really think I have had no past. Life is a dream following a dream. We are never quite awake to the realities of life.

I forgot to give you a lesson in bilboquet the other day. Come quickly, I will win some points from you. Unfortunately, I score always a black mark.

"Saint Victor," writes Houssaye, "came with me to Meulan. 'When I think,' Rachel said to him, 'that you have written so much about me, and I never have taken the trouble to read anything of yours!'

"It was his turn to have a lesson at billiards.

"Rachel gave him points, and gained a hundred-sous piece. She laughed like a child, and kissed the effigy of Napoleon, the First Consul, that was on it, saying, 'I will have a brooch made of it to act *Phèdre*. On that occasion, dear Saint Victor, I will read your article.'

"With her usual capriciousness in conversation, she reverted to the days she had sung to a guitar in the streets of Paris. 'I will show you,' she said, 'how, by the *tour de papillon*, I amused the crowd.'

"She pretended to play the guitar, and gave us a Place Royale representation. Nothing more fantastic could be imagined. She began to sing; in the middle of her song she stopped, crying out, 'See, a butterfly!' and she ran after an imaginary butterfly; she raised herself on

her toes; she pirouetted like a ballet-girl; she stretched out her hand, and at last caught the butterfly.

"'Ah,' she sighed, 'there it is. What a pretty dress butterflies' wings would make.'

"'Where is the butterfly?' asked Saint Victor.

"Rachel burst out laughing, and said, 'It has flown away.' And then, throwing herself into a chair, she added, 'Alas! life slips away running after butterflies — love, happiness, glory; but who catches them?'"

Towards the end of the summer of 1856 the disease had made such progress that the doctors peremptorily ordered Rachel to Egypt. Before leaving, she was obliged to come to terms with the Comédie Française, of which she was still a member. Her "leave" was understood to end on the 1st September. She wrote, therefore, to Achille Fould, the Minister, to obtain a prolongation of *congé* and a continuance of her salary. He communicated with the Director of the theatre and obtained leave of absence until 31st May, 1857, and the payment of her salary. Her enemies were in the habit of declaring that Rachel's best piece of acting was the part of the *malade imaginaire*, and her unjustifiable pleas of bad health when she wished to shirk her duty told against her now. The public, and even many of her comrades, were incredulous; they thought

it was another of the great tragedian's caprices, and she left Paris to a certain extent under a cloud. She was too weak and sad now, however, to mind much what the world said or thought. Her old friend, Jules Janin, did not let her go without a kindly word of "sincere and paternal tenderness." He told her she was still his child: that he had seen her grow up and reach the highest aim of her ambition. Now weariness, illness, and regrets for the art she was obliged for a time to forsake, were likely to discourage her. "But be strong and hopeful! Give yourself up to that Eastern sun and warm breezes which will restore you, happy and inspired, to those who love you, and to the great art of Tragedy, which has no future but in Rachel."

"*Au revoir chère et tendre mère*," she wrote to her anxious, heart-broken mother from Malta, on her way to Egypt, "*ne fais aucun canevas de drame pendant mon absence*." But, in spite of the delusions of the disease which sustained her in her brighter moments, she knew that there might be no *revoir* for her, and that the fifth act of the drama of her life was fast approaching.

On her arrival in Cairo, she was greeted by the French colony there with enthusiasm, and accepted the hospitality of one of them, Louis de Maubant, whose house was close to the

Esbekieh. Here, nursed by her faithful attendant, Rose, living on nothing but asses' milk, of which she took seven or eight glasses a day, Rachel picked up wonderfully. She received a great many visitors every evening, lying on a sofa or reclining in an American rocking-chair. Reading or being read to was her favorite pastime. Michel Lévy, the publisher, had sent her a large parcel of new books from Paris for her amusement; but she preferred her *Corneille*, of which she had brought an old volume with her, bound in green morocco. That, the Bible, Bossuet, and Fénelon, formed the staple of her literature. Although not a believer in the doctrines of Christianity, her innate appreciation of the great and pure in art led her infallibly towards the grand poems of her nation, and those trumpet-blasts of eloquence and religious fervor which distinguished the productions of the preachers of the *grand siècle*. The poor passionate, storm beaten heart seemed to rise, in the enforced calm and retirement of her present life, borne on the wings of these mighty souls, to greater heights than it had ever reached before; and her letters from the Nile, dried, as she says, with the sand of the desert and the dust of departed kings and queens, are tinged with the solemnity and dignity of death.

Soon she found the noise of the town too much for her, and accepted Soleiman Pasha's

invitation to go and stay with him in his house in the old town of Cairo. Tiring shortly of the splendor and luxury surrounding her there, she hired an old Arab house close to the banks of the Nile, and set up house on her own account. One of her French friends at Cairo describes her, dressed in a foulard dressing-gown made by herself, serving out the soup, with the majestic air of a Cleopatra, to her guests at lunch, in an old chipped dinner-service she had picked up in the bazaar. As time went on, however, she got up less frequently, and coughed so incessantly that the doctors ordered her up the Nile, hoping that the air of Luxor would do her good. A *diabieh* was hired and fitted up, and she started on her journey. She attempted to write cheerful letters to her children and mother, describing to her son Gabriel, from Kenneh on the 21st December, how she is sitting at the open window of her cabin, the Nile, like a lake, unruffled by the slightest breeze, stretching round her, while the sun, too hot himself, plunges his rays into the cool water, casting a thousand different lights and colors on the surface of the stream. She says she coughs still, but is drinking health and strength with the balmy air of Upper Egypt; and yet how can health and strength be consolidated with a pulse that varied from 84 to 92?

On her birthday she wrote to her mother, sending, not her birthday kiss, but her kiss of resurrection, astonished as she was, after so much suffering, to find herself still alive. A feverish restlessness and longing to get home pursued her. The doctor, the ruins (she is anchored off the Temple of Thebes), the quiet, all irritated her nerves, and she was possessed with that *nostalgie* for Paris which pursues all Parisians abroad.

We are sorely tempted to give copious extracts from her letters written at this time. Nothing can be conceived more heart-moving than the alternations from sadness to hope, the plans she makes for the future. She intends to build a country house at Thebes, and have all her friends out to stop with her; she will go to Montpellier, New York, Charleston, which she remembered agreed so well with her. But it was really to Paris that her heart turned with most yearning; and there, it was said, those who had worshipped and bowed before the enchantress in her day of triumph were now become oblivious and indifferent. She wrote the following letter to him she loved from Thebes on the 10th March:—

For the last eighteen months they have been trying to make the coffin destined to receive me when I am dead. The carpenter, I think, must have struck work, he is so

long about it, and meantime I am utterly worn out and only long to lie down in a horizontal position forever. I wish for nothing now; and, really, to drag on the animal life I am obliged to submit to since the development of this long, painful, and sad illness — better, a hundred times, be nailed down in one's coffin, and put to sleep with the mummies round me. I may not die of consumption, but will certainly die of *ennui*. A wonderful solitude surrounds me. Remember, I am alone with Rose, a cook, and a Polish doctor. Still, I have constantly before my eyes a blue sky, a delicious atmosphere, and this strong, gentle river, that lects on its bosom the poor invalid's boat as softly as a mother carries her first-born. But these awe-inspiring memories of ancient Egypt, these heaps of ruins, these colossal figures cut out of the granite rock, are all too overwhelming for a crushed spirit and weakened body. . . .

You would have wept had you seen me carried on board the vessel to go to Alexandria. I really cannot imagine what my frail body is made of. Life is so tenacious. I had no idea any one could suffer like this and not die a thousand times. I must leave you now. I am seized by a fit of coughing that makes me hot and cold.

Then she gives the following translation of an Arab legend: —

Colombe blanche, où vas-tu? Tes ailes frappent l'air à pleines volées et t'emportent plus loin, plus loin, plus loin.

La Colombe. — "Je vais où il m'attend, au-delà des nues plus loin, plus loin, plus loin."

La Jeune Femme. — "Colombe blanche, d'où reviens-tu? Tes ailes brisées me jettent des gouttes de sang."

La Chimère. — "Je revens mourir, où il m'a aimée, car il ne m'aime plus."

The once haughty and triumphant Rachel had already tasted the bitterness of death when she wrote these words.

CHAPTER XIX.

LAST JOURNEY.

RACHEL returned to Paris, and, on the 1st July, 1857, ceased to belong officially to the Théâtre Français. In her letter of resignation she does not attempt to stipulate for any terms or continuance of her salary: —

> A MONSIEUR EMPIS, Administrateur Général de la Comédie Française. — J'ai le regret prétend de vous annoncer que ma santé ne me permet pas d'espérer ma rentrée prochaine au Théâtre Français. J'accepterai donc ce que la comité decidera à l'égard de ma retraite.
>
> Agréez, &c.

The very brevity of this letter shows that Rachel herself looked upon it as a supreme farewell to her artistic career. It was accompanied by a doctor's certificate, to the effect that, although her health had improved, she could not reappear on the stage for some time, and must spend the winter in the south of France.

Meantime she quitted her hotel in the Rue Trudon, and established herself in an apartment

in the Place Royale. "It is on the way to Père-la-Chaise," she said, with a smile, "and my friends will have more room here on the day of my funeral."

She wrote to a friend: —

I am very ill; I am on the eve of departure, — not for another world, but for a warmer climate. My nervous system, as well as my entire body, must be built up, if it is not too late. I feel a great darkness and void in my head and in my intelligence. All is suddenly extinguished, and Rachel has ceased to exist! Ah, poor Rachel! that Rachel of whom I was so proud, — too proud, perhaps; nothing troubles me now to say! This letter is to bid you farewell, my friend; that farewell which the distance that separates us forbids us to say personally to one another.

What events have passed since our last meeting, and what a grand voyage! I cannot speak of it without weeping. But how could I foresee its sad ending? I was so certain of success. And this terrible disease, — this shirt of Nessus that I cannot tear off! I trusted to my luck and my strength, and, without any precautions, undertook that terrible expedition to New York. Shall I return now, — will God have pity on me, for the sake of my children, my friends, or will He take me to Himself?

Farewell, my friend! This letter will most likely be the last you will ever receive from me. You, who knew Rachel so brilliant, who saw her in her luxury and her splendor, who so often applauded her in her triumphs, — you would find a difficulty in recognizing her now in the skeleton that she drags about with her unceasingly.

Then comes the last letter written before her departure. It is addressed to Augustine Brohan, whom, we may imagine, touched by a temporary penitence for the many hard things she had said about Rachel during the days of comradeship at the Théâtre Français, had written a letter expressing sympathy with her rival in her present distress: "Patience and resignation have become my motto. I am most grateful, dear Mademoiselle Brohan, for your amiable interest; but I am afraid God alone can help me now! I am leaving directly for the South. I hope the warmth and sunshine will calm my suffering."

Shortly after, she left for Le Cannet, where A. L. Sardou, the father of the famous dramatist, had offered her his villa. The morning of her departure she expressed a wish to bid good-by for the last time to the two theatres which had witnessed her period of probation and the glorious days of her triumphs. Jules Janin tells us: —

The day she quitted Paris she rose very early. When those around her suggested that she ought to rest as long as possible, she answered that she had determined to pay a visit to the scenes connected with her earlier days, and that her family and friends might come to take leave of her at the station. She would listen to no remonstrance, and those about her remarked that for some time she had not displayed so much energy.

When she was dressed she entered her carriage, and gave orders to drive first to the Gymnase and then to the Français.

The morning (it was not quite six o'clock) was cold and misty. No a sound was to be heard in the sleeping city, and the great facade of the Rue Richelieu stood silent and desolate. The entrance and portico loomed faintly through the morning mist. The small side-door, where the child Rachel had knocked so often in vain with her little hand, thin and red with fingers and cold, was hardly visible. As she gazed, she must have lived over again all those days of varying sadness and joy, of depression and exaltation, which are a portion of every actor's life. Slowly she turned away, looking forward to look at the walls of the theatre where she had awakened the echoes with the voice of Hermione, Camille, and Monime, and where she had made men and women tremble and weep as she chanted the "Marseillaise." When she reached the station, where her friends and relations waited to say the last words of parting, a parting that was to be eternal, she tried to walk from her carriage to the train, but was obliged to submit to be carried in a chair. She smiled once more at the crowd of sympathetic faces, then gently closed her eyes, as if that were the memory she wished to take with her.

Her life, thanks to the warm, dry air of Le Cannet, was prolonged until the month of January, 1858, much longer than she herself expected. Towards the end of December, feeling her strength fail, she made a supreme effort. In one day she wrote seventeen letters, and prepared seventeen little boxes, filled with orange

flowers; on the top of each she laid one of the letters. Émile de Girardin had his framed, and kept it as a precious heirloom: —

1er Janvier, 1858.

Je vous embrasse cette nouvelle année. Je ne pensais pas, cher ami, pouvoir encore, en 1858, vous envoyer ma sincère affection.

The doctor, who was called in at the last moment, has left an interesting account of these few hours before her death. On entering the sick-room, he saw that the phthisis had entered the third and last stage. Her face was as white as the pillow on which it lay; the voice was broken and weak. The spark of life still remaining seemed concentrated in the wondrous eyes; their expression was indescribable. She talked sensibly with those around her. "Ah, Sarah," she said to her sister, "I have been thinking of *Polyeucte* all night. If you only knew what new, what magnificent effects I have conceived! In studying, take my word for it, declamation and gesture are of little avail. You have to think, to weep."

On the 3d of January, 1858, at eleven o'clock in the evening, twenty-nine hours after the arrival of the doctor, she passed away. To the very last she was conscious of the presence of those she loved. When her hand was already cold in death, she stretched it towards them, seeking

theirs, and, when her lips could no longer formulate a word, she made a sign of eternal farewell. She did not forget her duty, either, towards those dependent on her. She gave directions about her affairs, arranging every minute detail like a traveller starting on a long journey, rather than a person facing death. During the night of the 2d and 3d she dictated her will, until obliged to stop from fatigue. On the 3d, at nine o'clock in the morning, she had a violent attack of suffocation. When the crisis was past, she began dictating again, beginning where she had left off the night before. She then read over the whole carefully, made some corrections, and, raising herself in bed, signed the document. Later she distributed some small souvenirs, one to every one present, accompanying each with a word of gratitude and affection.

At ten o'clock in the evening there was another attack of suffocation, much more prolonged than the last. After an hour's struggle her eyes closed, an extreme pallor overspread her face, that intense suffering had suffused with color for a moment. Sarah, frightened, called "Rachel!" and implored her sister to answer; but in vain. She felt her heart, her pulse; there was only the slightest flutter perceptible, vibrations of the life that was ebbing away. Rose, her attached and devoted servant,

burst into tears and fell on her knees at the foot of her mistress's bed. A smile hovered on the lips of the dying woman. Some Israelite priests, whom Sarah had sent for to Nice, chanted the service for the dead: —

"Ascend to God, daughter of Israel. Behold, Lord, the sufferings of thy servant. Take pity on her; shorten her anguish, O God, and may those she has undergone make amends for her sins."

Rachel turned with a smile of ineffable tenderness to Sarah, murmuring indistinctly the words of Corneille in *Les Horaces*, "*Albe, mon cher patrie et mon premier amour*," and then the name of her sister Rebecca. Thus she passed to her rest.

It was not before the morning of the 5th January that the great actress's death was known at the Théâtre Français. *Chatterton* and the *Voyage à Dappe* were to have been given that evening; the bills were already up, but were immediately replaced by others announcing the sad event and the closing of the theatre for the night. The Saturday following, the coffin arrived in Paris, and was placed in the apartment of the Rue Royale. On the 11th the funeral took place, and was attended by a crowd of all that was eminent in art or letters of the Paris of the day. The poor heart, lying still and cold, was saved one pang added to the many it had

undergone. Her eldest son was absent, kept at school at Geneva, and knew nothing of his mother's death. When Count Walewski was asked if the boy were to attend the funeral, he said he did not think it necessary, and that it would cause the child a sad and disagreeable impression; so the young Alexander Antoine Colonna, Viscount Walewski (for he was openly acknowledged), son of the first Minister of the Empire and the actress Rachel, was not chief mourner at his mother's funeral.

What need to recapitulate the panegyrics that were spoken over her grave? Jules Janin, Théophile Gautier, Paul de Saint Victor, all praised her in speeches it did not need any effort of oratory to render eloquent; for they were instinct with the warmth of artistic appreciation, and pathetic by reason of their deep and sincere regret. The words sobbed out by Dejazet, as she cast violets on her comrade's grave, "*Pauvre femme! ah la pauvre femme!*" are enough for us. They contain neither the condemnation of her enemies nor the praise of her friends, but they are pregnant with all the comprehensive pity of one who understood the difficulties and temptations of her sister artist's life.

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